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THE LIFE OF MARY KINGSLEY



*Biographies by the Same Author*

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THE LIFE OF HORACE WALPOLE

SAINTS AND SCHOLARS—BIOGRAPHICAL  
STUDIES





Miss Anne H. H. H. H.

Mr. H. H. H.

the melancholy picture of one who  
tried to be just to all parties

# THE LIFE OF MARY KINGSLEY

BY  
STEPHEN GWYNN



MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED  
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## PREFACE

WHEN Mary Kingsley died, *The Times* in its obituary notice anticipated that a Life of her would soon be written. In fact, one was undertaken by her brother, Charles Kingsley. But, as had happened when seven years earlier he set to work on a Memoir of their father, the task sped like Penelope's, and he also died in 1909, leaving nothing but a ravelled web. By that time, interest in her personality had lessened; and the two persons most likely to undertake the unfinished work, Mrs. J. R. Green and E. D. Morel, were full of other concerns—she with Ireland, he with the Congo.

Unhappily, in course of time Mary Kingsley's papers perished accidentally where they were stored, so that of what was written to her nothing is available. It is hardly less to be regretted that Sir George Goldie at his death ordered the destruction of all his correspondence—among which there must have been much of the highest interest from her.

And so the years passed, and the time when she was a familiar figure grew so remote that one day I found myself suddenly of surpassing interest to a very able woman who had lived much in Africa. She had never before spoken with one who had even seen Mary Kingsley—whom she counted one of the greatest personalities of her age. That in reality is what led me to consider that if her memory were to be revived among us who knew her, there was no time to lose.

Mr. George Macmillan, who had been her friend even more than her publisher, agreed with me; and I set to work. It was my fortune to meet with two of

those who were her close friends—Lady MacDonald and Mr. Dennis Kemp. Those who read this book will realise what reason I have to thank them. Sir Matthew Nathan placed at my disposal all her letters to him—some of the most characteristic that she ever wrote. Lady Millar was kind enough to look out the series which her father, Sir Alfred Lyall, had preserved, and her brother, Colonel Lyall, gave me permission to use them. Lord Lugard was at pains to find one or two letters which he had stowed away—and those who have made this kind of search know how much trouble it involves. Mrs. Morel put at my disposal not only Mary Kingsley's letters to her husband, but also a collection of papers bearing on the hut-tax war. Another of her closest friends, Mrs. J. R. Green, must have had many letters from her, but these have disappeared. Fortunately Mrs. Green's executor, I.t.-Col. Stopford, discovered two files of obituary press cuttings and correspondence, which also contained old reports of lectures and magazine cuttings sent to Mrs. Green by Mary Kingsley. I owe to this the discovery of her lecture reprinted in Chap. VI., which adds new episodes to the saga of her Travels.

Mr. and Mrs. George Macmillan are too closely involved in this undertaking to need or desire the expression of my thanks.

But my acknowledgments are due to M. Emile Baillaud of the *Institut Colonial* at Marseilles for permission to reproduce in translation an important passage from his book, *La Politique indigène de l'Angleterre en Afrique Occidentale*.

References in the text to *West African Studies* are in all cases to the second edition.

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## MAP

TROPICAL WEST AFRICA . . . . .	<i>At end of volume</i>
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## CHAPTER I

### PARENTAGE AND HOME LIFE

A LIFE of Mary Kingsley, by whomsoever written, could scarcely fail to reproduce and preserve something of her vivid, original humour, her spirit of adventure and of comradeship, and her noble zeal for justice. Many of her letters are available; they relate to the subjects on which her life's work was spent; and each and all, they express not only her views, but her personality, for no woman ever had a more unfailing gift for putting herself on to paper. A biographer could know Mary Kingsley from her published work and from her letters almost as though by personal contact. Yet even thirty-one years after her death there are still living many who had the honour of her friendship, and several of these—I among them—have recorded their personal memories and impressions. To write her Life, however, it was necessary to understand something of the political conditions which affected West African affairs, and consequently Mary Kingsley's lifework, during the period from 1892 to 1900; and here also I knew as much as made it justifiable for me to undertake the task.

But for what lies beyond, and deeper, for the effort to show what Mary Kingsley accomplished in her brief lifetime, I can feel no such assurance. She advocated certain broad principles, she made war upon certain conceptions, or rather misconceptions, as to the tasks of government in tropical Africa; and although it is possible to show that since her intervention a great change in British policy towards the African races has taken place, it is not possible for me—it is perhaps not possible for

any one living—to say how much of this change is due to her influence. I cannot even be sure how far she would have approved in detail the work accomplished by British administration, or how far the details of it are to be reconciled with her principles.

Yet this I can say and I think can prove—that since her work there has taken place in the British public what can perhaps best be called a change of heart towards the African; and that change has had outcome in a new orientation of policy which was almost beyond her hopes. This also I can say—that among those I have met who knew West Africa, her influence was most highly rated, and most homage was paid to her name, by the persons whose knowledge of the black peoples was most affectionate and intimate.

I set out on this work, not to put in claims on her behalf for recognition—the last thing that would have concerned her—for I am convinced that so long as there is genuine study of African matters, her name will never be forgotten. My purpose is chiefly to make available for serious students what I know will interest them; but also, I permit myself the hope that the wider public which she reached in her lifetime may experience some renewal of contact with her speaking voice, and once more be moved to sympathy with those ideals which were closest to her heart.

The outline of her life, though most unusual, is of extreme simplicity. It was determined by the personality of her father, George Kingsley, second of three notable brothers, of whom Charles, the eldest, and Henry, the youngest, earned fame as writers. George, a writer also, was a born adventurer. Married or single, he was incapable of staying at home, and Mary Kingsley's girlhood was spent at a little house in Highgate, helping her mother, while her father wandered the world, attached to this or that exploring party. But his library remained; for he was student no less than adventurer—

student of English literature, student of natural history, student of anthropology. His daughter read his books, with leave and without leave, and heard his talk during the brief periods when he was at home. As she grew up, she evidently became his close companion. Then they moved to Cambridge and she made friends with men of science, though only in the intervals of house-work, and, later, of nursing her mother through a long and hopeless illness. When she was just thirty, her father's death, followed in a few weeks by her mother's, left her with the desolating freedom of loneliness. All her life her hands had been more than full with the needs of service: now they were suddenly empty. Her existence had been one of extraordinary seclusion: she had scarcely ever left her home or moved in any society apart from it. Indeed, as she put it herself, she had never had a personal life of her own; all had gone into doing odd jobs for other people. Now inevitably, by habit, she looked out for a job to do, and she found it in the hope of completing a work on native religion and law which her father had left unfinished.

He had transmitted to her his interest in these subjects; and he had transmitted also a passion for adventure with a perfect indifference to fear. The material for study was naturally to be had most abundantly and unspoilt where European influence was least; and so she followed her quest, not merely into that region of Africa where the climate in itself is a deadly danger, but into districts, parts of which no white man or woman had traversed before her, and where she journeyed alone without protection among cannibals and with cannibals.

She came back from a first journey bringing her sheaves with her, and the opinion of scientists encouraged her to obtain further results for anthropology and for natural history. The account of her second journey was written in her *Travels*, and the public bought with enthusiasm the story of her adventures. But the cast of her mind had made it impossible to confine herself

to adventure for its own sake, or to seek knowledge merely for the advancement of science. What she had seen in West Africa raised issues of humanity, affecting the honour and the interest of her country no less than the welfare of the Africans whom she had learnt to love; and she spoke her mind strongly and even controversially, with the hope to influence public opinion, but certainly never thinking to become entangled in politics.

Yet, since affairs were at a turning-point in West Africa, those who shared her views welcomed this unexpected ally, and she was pressed to continue not only writing, but speaking; and her intention of returning to the adventure or the quest—"to skylark and study in West Africa," as she put it—was deferred, at first only for a while. But then came an outbreak in Great Britain's oldest West African possession, on a scale not known before, and caused by resistance to a measure which natives regarded as unjust. In her judgment the injustice was real, and arose from culpable ignorance of native law; and she fought it unremittingly, in the Press and on the platform, and, more at large, in a second book—which, though inevitably less popular than the *Travels*, had also a surprising success. For upwards of a year she spent herself in this struggle, squandering energy and health, while there was the least hope of effecting anything.

Then, when her plans were already laid for a new expedition to the West Coast, came the Boer War, with its violent opening reverses and the resulting disorganisation. She could not resist the impulses that drew her, and early in 1900 went out to the Cape, where immediately on landing she found a call for help in a hospital to nurse Boer prisoners; she went there, nursed them, caught fever and died.

Thus her whole individual working life falls into a period of eight years; her public career barely covered four, and she was virtually fighting a lone-hand campaign.

Yet, if I may set down at once my own personal impression, I do not believe that in my lifetime any individual without the support of an organisation has so profoundly and beneficently influenced the course of history. That may be an excessive estimate; but of this I am sure: she was by far the most effective propagandist of her time. It is the fable of the wind and the sun and the traveller's cloak. People shed their prejudices under the warmth of her humour and of her humility. She never tried to laugh anybody out of anything; but she got them laughing with her, and then they listened when she spoke to them of common sense, of national interests, and, in the last resort, of honour and of justice.

And now, so far as I can arrange it, she shall tell her own story.

Her memoir of her father, published in 1899 along with certain papers of his under the title of *Notes on Sport and Travel*, begins with observations "concerning Kingsleys in general," who "had gone on for century after century hunting, fishing, fighting in an English-gentlemanly sort of way." In the generation before hers, it reached what she calls "its Elizabethan period." Mr. Kingsley, rector of St. Luke's, Chelsea, had four sons, the eldest of whom, an officer in the Royal Navy, died at his post on board a disease-stricken gunboat. Of the three others, Charles, the eldest, was in her judgment "the greatest"; Henry "had possibly the greater literary gift"; George "was the most typical Kingsley, at the best, of all these."

What she found typical in Kingsleys was "the bold adventurous spirit of their race" and the passionate love of Nature.

"George Kingsley loved Nature so utterly that life without her unspoiled companionship was intolerable to him. . . . To gain but half of what his heart desired to gain, he gave away all hope of fortune or renown, and

deemed that by that bargain he had made himself the winner in the game of life. Taken all in all, George was certainly the happiest of the three brothers."

All three spent the early years of boyhood at Clovelly, where their father then was "a parson who won the hearts of the stalwart Devonshire fishermen, because he feared no danger, and could manage a boat, shoot a herring-net, and haul a seine as one of themselves." The change to Chelsea, "then a dismal suburb," came hard upon Nature-lovers, born sportsmen. Yet they followed other adventures, as George Kingsley's daughter in her day and generation also followed them, by proxy. What she tells now of her father and her brothers is her own history no less than theirs:—

In the Rectory library they found good food for dreamers—books which roused within them the spirit of adventure, and held their minds in thrall with the glamour of strange lands. There, at their leisure, they could pore over venerable treatises on natural history, embellished with fantastical illustrations dating from that happy age when the artistic imagination wandered free in a paradise that was untainted by the presence of that serpent Scientific Accuracy: records relating to the West Indian islands and the golden Spanish Main; books that had been collected by their mother's ancestors, who were for generations planters in Barbados and Demerara. Histories of the globe, and lordly folios, on whose maps full many a sturdy coastline dwindled into dots, full many a line of dots went stumbling on to perish at the feet of pregnant nothingness. Volume on volume of famous voyagers—Dampier, Rogers, Shelrocke, Byron, Cook, and grand old Esquemeling—the Froissart of the Buccanciers—and respectable Captain Charles Johnson, deeply interested and very properly shocked at *The Robberies and Murders of the Most Notorious Pirates*. Truly "to the southwards many wondrous isles, many strange fishes, many monstrous Patagones withdrew their senses."<sup>1</sup>

Freedom began for George Kingsley when school-days ended and he became a medical student, at liberty after term ended at the hospital to shoulder a knapsack, shove a sketch-book in his pocket and be "off for a

<sup>1</sup> *Notes of Sport and Travel*, p. 11.

long ramble in Germany or Switzerland or Austria, through the Rhineland or through the Thüringen Wald, the Böhmerwald and the Erz-Gebirge, through the Swiss or the Tyrolean Alps, and once through Bohemia and Moravia, and far away into the Carpathian mountains." That is the reason why Mary Kingsley, educating herself to be her father's companion, grew up easily at home in German but quite unable to speak French. All these brothers, and all the school of 'muscular Christianity' with which they had affiliations, were Teuton by sympathy, not Latin. Henry Kingsley, who after a few years spent in Australia, as stock-rider, miner and mounted policeman, had come back to a literary career with journalism as his profession, chose to see the Franco-Prussian War as correspondent from the German side. Mary Kingsley inherited these prepossessions. Yet in all that was written about West Africa during the period when France most sharply challenged English interests there, no English pen was so generous as hers in appreciation of French enterprise. Here, too, she may have learnt from her "many-minded father" (it is the epithet she gives him), for on finishing his medical studies in London George Kingsley went to Paris for further instruction in anatomy, and it chanced to be the year 1848. He saw the Revolution which ousted Louis Philippe, and he did not see it merely as a spectator: the scar of a musket-ball in his left biceps, received when he was helping other enthusiasts to erect a barricade, was a memento of these days.

In 1849, aged twenty-three, he was in Wales studying with a cousin when cholera broke out, and he fought the plague unafraid by day and night. Eight years later his brother Charles, in his novel *Two Years Ago*, described the cholera epidemic of 1854 and described also a "self-willed and adventurous young doctor, the only person in the town who seemed to grow healthier and actually happier as the work went on." Mary Kingsley does not, I think, suggest that Tom Thurnall is a portrait



of her father, but only that in describing Tom Thurnall's fight against cholera, Charles was "chronicling his brother's deeds." Yet she points out that the Canon, sketching the subsequent career of his hero, showed a prophetic insight. "Stay drudging in London Tom Thurnall would not; settle down in a country practice he would not. He vanished into infinite space, and was heard of by occasional letters dated from the Rocky Mountains, the Spanish West Indies, Otaheite, Singapore, the Falkland Islands, and all manner of unexpected places." Prophetic: for it was not till five years after *Two Years Ago* was published that George Kingsley got his chance to do what Tom Thurnall is pictured as doing; but when the chance came, he never let go of it.

The way of life which he had chosen was not professionally strenuous. In 1850 he became private physician to the first Marquis of Ailesbury, and went on in the same capacity with one great nobleman after another. This meant that he had his fill of shooting and fishing, and also leisure for more serious pursuits. At thirty he was elected a Fellow of the Linnean Society "for his investigations into the structure of some of the lower forms of animal life," and he was a Fellow of the Royal Microscopical Society from the date of its foundation. Literature tempted him, too, in various forms. He began and actually published a translation of four of Paul Heyse's *Novellen*; he began a translation of Heine's poems and prose works, but this he did not finish. Nor did he bring to completion a projected novel about everyday life in the time of Charles II, for which the library of Bridgewater House, then at his command, seemed to offer wealth of material. Nor again did he carry out a projected catalogue of early quartos of Elizabethan dramatists in that same library, "with lives of the dramatists and a short criticism on each man and his style." What he did, however, was to fill his mind and his notebooks with the material for works of this kind, and in this way stored the brain which was to be for two or three

months yearly—at least, in most years—at his daughter's disposal. That is, probably, his chief significance in the history of science and of literature. He had every equipment for doing permanent work of his own, except the talent for finishing. Such men are often great educators, if they meet a pupil who has the disposition not only to acquire knowledge, but to employ it.

He took the first step towards providing himself with such a pupil when in 1860, at the age of thirty-four, he married Mary Bailey, in her daughter's words, "a lady whose extraordinary benevolence endeared her to every one who was fortunate enough to come within the circle of her friendship, and whose faculty for managing affairs of business enabled her to take from her husband's shoulders the burden of many of the petty cares of life." Their home was established in 1863 at "a little house in Southwood Lane at Highgate," and there it continued to be till 1879. Mary Kingsley, who had been born in 1862, went to Highgate as a baby: her brother Charles was born there. During this time George Kingsley was generally wandering about in the Mediterranean or in Egypt; but at last, in 1867, he had experience of wider travel, going with the young Earl of Pembroke to cruise in the South Seas, where for the greater part of three years the crew of the *Albatross* lived "a real knockabout seafaring life," which was chronicled in a book called *South Sea Bubbles; by the Earl and the Doctor*. It was in this period that he came to know and love the tropics, and transmitted that love to his daughter.

"Where we differ," she says, "is on the subject of islands; he adored islands, I do not. I would rather be out at sea, with no land near, in any weather, on a homeward-bound collier flying light, than on any island ever made. I greatly prefer a tropical continental land-mass, with thousands of square miles of dark forest, swamps, and mountain ranges—not mere peaks which have got adrift and anchored out at sea—a land with great rivers which come from a thousand miles away and swing past you at a quick march, rush past you in a cavalry charge over rapids, mark time in dangerous, sandy, muddy estuaries, bound seawards ever, what-

ever their pace may be when you see them—things that mean business—a spacious land you have no fear of falling over the edge of into the ocean when either a pack of misguided heathen, or an isolated big-game lunatic, makes rapid action advisable, whether you have a boat ready on the beach or no; but my father was not of this way of thinking.”

After the South Seas, George Kingsley knew the wild frontier of the United States, hunting buffalo and moose and grizzlies with Lord Dunraven, and after that again, Newfoundland, Frobisher Straits, Cape Colony, Japan, New Zealand and Australia. But the detail of his career does not concern us. What should be noted is that his experiences as they came to him were related to his wife, at long intervals, but in vivid letters which imply in every word the habit of close and complete companionship. They could have been written only to a very intelligent and sympathetic woman, and that is really all we know of Mary Kingsley's mother; except for her daughter's incidental statement that the mistress of the house in Southwood Lane was “known to be an excellent revolver shot and to keep a lot of dogs.” This passing remark is meant to explain the disappointment of an expectation alleged to prevail among the inhabitants of an adjacent terrace. They thought that the occupants of the little detached house and garden would all be found one morning with their throats cut, by burglars who were reputed to use this cover as a base for operations against the terrace.

But on the relations which prevailed between father and daughter, we have much suggestive matter. Mary Kingsley's detail was always vivid, it is the main charm of her writing; and an illuminating passage deals with what the Kingsley family at large referred to as “George's awful temper.”

It was not awful when you lived with it at close quarters and got used to it. It was volcanic, but never vindictive. I knew as a child perfectly well that if I successfully dodged a copy of Brand's *Dictionary of the Arts and Sciences*, or some other work,

temporarily diverted into use as a projectile in consequence of some conduct of mine, all would be well, provided I went away and was quiet for a time. No one in his family knew half so much of his temper as I did. His wife he was ever anxious about on account of her delicate health; moreover, she was not an irritating person to any one—neither was his son; but I was so, mainly because in early years I was liable, either directly or indirectly, to cause sudden noises. For example, I had in early life a taste for fighting-cocks; my mother, who was fond of any kind of animal, let me keep them. During those long months when my father was absent from home, those fighting-cocks behaved well; when he came home they did little else but crow. There is something fine in a game-cock's crow, and it is stirring; it used to produce that effect on my father considerably, and I might just as well have crowed those crows myself, for I was held accountable for them. Therefore, when my father came home, a transportation of game-cocks to the uttermost end of the long Highgate garden was promptly carried out by me for fear worse might befall. But I could never make the run down there cock-tight; they used to leak out and either come up to the house, reserving their clarion crow till well under the study window—a performance rewarded promptly with miscellaneous projectiles and observations—or they would go away and have a quiet fight with a neighbour's valued dorking; in fact, they kept me in such a state of nervous apprehension that I neglected other things and got into trouble that way. Also, when I had discovered that one of the champions had left his home, I used to go after him on to the neighbour's premises regardless of consequences; for, above all things, fighting was a thing forbidden by me. I knew how to prevent them fighting each other; an old gardener, whose main boast was that when a boy he had been with the *great* Lord Derby—he of the “Derby strain,” of course, I mean—taught me how to do that; but when I missed Ki Ki from his domestic circle, and saw his red cloth cloak sticking in the hedge, I knew what was going on and went after him. Hence if I was wanted just then by my family I was not available; and when I returned with Ki Ki under my arm, furious at having had his pleasure spoilt by a silly interfering girl, I had as lively a time as Ki Ki had lost.<sup>1</sup>

One may pause to remark that the knowledge gathered from the gardener was typical of much that Mary Kingsley collected and valued herself on; a taste for fighting-

<sup>1</sup> *Notes on Sport and Travel*, p. 195.

cocks, and for the society which is learned in the handling of them, foreshadowed much in her later development, when she was very ready to see likeable virtues in African tribes with a repute for cannibalism. They must of course—whether cocks or cannibals—be taught not to do it; and it hurt her feelings that the master would be highly delighted “when Ki Ki had flown at the post-man and driven him into the coal-cellar or committed some such flagrant breach of the peace”; but that all the crows, and the letters requesting that “such dangerous animals should either be confined *or* destroyed” went down to her account.

Then again her position in the household led to trouble: she defines it:

I was my mother's chief officer from the day I could first carry a duster, and I had to do the tidying-up—that is to say, I became responsible for everything lost in the establishment. This again embroiled me with my father.

Again, she used (as the chief officer) to decorate the fire-grates “with nice clean white willow shavings, with just a twinkle of gold shavings on the top.” He, as a great smoker, found it convenient to throw matches into grates and so ‘conclusions passed the carcass.’ Nor was that all. “Infinite were the points of collision between him and me, very largely from our similarity of taste.” He brought home a tin of gunpowder and discoursed to a friend on its strength: she, who had been reading about the Franco-Prussian War, desired to test the reputed explosive, and also to see how mines worked in warfare, with the result that a tub of liquid manure was “blown over the great spring blanket wash which hung on a clothes line near by. . . . I had other reasons than scientific ones given me to remember that affair,” she observes in a sketch of her life given to *M.A.P.* in May 1899, when her notability was such as to justify the paper in publishing a notice of her, between similar autobiographies submitted by a famous trainer and a

popular novelist. The main part of this document may now be given to complete the suggested picture of her girlhood:—

The whole of my childhood and youth was spent at home, in the house and garden. The living outside world I saw little of, and cared less for, for I felt myself out of place at the few parties I ever had the chance of going to, and I deservedly was unpopular with my own generation, for I knew nothing of play and such things. But this was not superiority of mind in me, at all; the truth was I had a great amusing world of my own other people did not know, or care about—that was in the books in my father's library.

They were mostly old books on the West Indies, and old medical books, and old travel books and what not; fiction was represented in it by the works of Smollett, and little else. No one would believe the number, or character, of the books I absorbed. I did not say anything about them, finding if I did it generally meant an injunction not to do it. My favourites among them were Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, Johnson's *Robberies and Murders of the Most Notorious Pirates*, and Bayle's *Dictionary*. When my father was home from one of his long and many journeys, new books used to come into the house, and although I did not like them as the old, yet they had to be read too. But just as I was coming to the conclusion that new books were unworthy of my serious attention, one turned up that fascinated me wildly. It was *Solar Physics*, by Professor Norman Lockyer. That book opened a new world for me, and also got me into trouble in my old one.

It was difficult to get hold of, because my father was interested in it, too, but still I stuck to it, and one dreadful evening my father's friend, the doctor, came in. My father asked him if he had read *Solar Physics*, said it was an interesting book, etc., and finally, that he would lend it him and send it round in the morning. I thought, "No, not if I know it will you lend that book," and so I took it and hid it away in some straw in a shed.

I need not say when a search for it next morning was instituted I was held to know where it was. I said neither aye or nay, and the book returned to civilised society when I had got right through it—not before.

About this time I developed a passionate devotion for the science of chemistry, and I went in for it—experiments not being allowed—in the available books in the library. Most of them

were books on alchemy, and the rest entirely obsolete. After most carefully getting up all the information these could give me, I happened on a gentleman who knew modern chemistry, and tried my information on him. He said he had not heard anything so ridiculous for years, and recommended I should be placed in a museum as a compendium of exploded chemical theories, which hurt my feelings very much, and I cried bitterly at not being taught things.

My home authorities said I had no business to want to be taught such things, but presented me with a copy of Craik's *Pursuit of Knowledge Under Difficulties*. From this book I learned how men had invented the steam engine from observing the habits of tea-kettles, and mastered exceedingly difficult dead languages from merely finding a leaf of a book, written therein, in a dust-bin, and subsequently had attained such eminence in their respective walks of knowledge that Europe trembled at their name. This lesson went home. I saw it was silly to go whining about looking for someone to teach me; if I wanted scientific knowledge there were kettles, and in addition, an extremely complicated pump which was always out of order, while if I wanted scholarship there was the library to go on with, with the addition of my brother's school books.

I worked very hard in a time-wasting way at mathematics, seeing I must know something of them for science, and I got enough money to take in that delightful paper *The English Mechanic*. What *The English Mechanic* was to me for years I cannot explain. What I should have done without its companionship between sixteen and twenty I do not care to think. We had at this period of my existence moved down into north-west Kent, to a secluded spot where the houses were always in some state of dilapidation, where the residents had to be handy men if they would not lead miserable existences. With the aid of *The English Mechanic* I became a handy man. During the early stages of my education, I used up a good deal of rag one way and another, and shed a deal of gore of my own. But I got on.

One of my greatest trials was connected with plumbing work. I met with a crisis before I was equal to it. A pipe required cutting off in the coach-house. The affair was urgent; it required very little to bring a ceiling down in that locality at any time, and upstairs water was soaking into one freely. The pipe which was doing it presented itself exposed in the coach-house below, and if I could cut it through and double it back, and hammer it up neatly, all would be well. We had a boy connected with odd jobs, too, then, and I summoned him to attend on me and my

operations. He was impressed with the workmanlike manner in which I proceeded. Standing on a box, I cut the lead pipe gallantly through; swish came out a jet of water that knocked me over, box and all, and played on me as if I were a rick-fire and it the local fire brigade, and a wild yell of joy came from that wretched boy. Of course I ought to have turned the water off from the main, and so on, first, but, as I have said, my education was unfinished in plumbing at the time.

I add one note from a letter to her friend and publisher, written in the last year of her life :—

“ I don't know if I ever revealed the fact to you that being allowed to learn German was *all* the paid-for education I ever had. £2000 was spent on my brother's, I still hope not in vain. The man who taught me German found I had worked myself up to a point by wrong methods but still there I was; and so he just took *Faust* and spelt it out with me, and I am it, and can say *Habe nun ach ! Philosophie*, etc. But here I and Faust part, for I want no devil. I have gone off with the *Erdegeist*.

Faust went deep into her system : she owed much to the Germans. But in the main she was a self-taught pupil.

On the whole we gather the picture of a queer gawky hobbledehoyish girlhood, in a way exceedingly unfeminine, with no use for frills. Yet in another way, and much more primitive, we see the training of a woman for woman's work, which, in the primitive relation, is to wait upon man : doing the work of the house for the benefit of one whose interest and occupation lie outside the house. No woman that ever lived had more admiration for man in his manliness—man the hunter, the warrior, the maker, the student, the explorer, man the adventurer, in whatever realm. She knew, and she says it in her memoir of him, that her father shortened her mother's life and helped to break her health by the strain of anxiety imposed when he would disappear for long periods in the South Seas among tornadoes and cannibals, or in the prairie when Indian war was at its savagest; yet she found no fault, even though she knew also that no



call of duty took him to these places, but simply an impulse in restless brain and blood. The world was in her full belief the richer for such lives as his: "the very happy, honourable life of a noble, perfect English gentleman—a man who all his life long, wild as the circumstances of it had often been, great as the temptations of it had been, never did a mean act or thought a mean thought, and never felt fear."<sup>1</sup>

That, expressed in the maturity of her power, is what the man meant to her, who dominated her life till she was turned thirty. When she was seventeen—"a thin pale girl of middle height, with straight fair hair and blue eyes, quiet and of domestic habits," as her friend Miss Lucy Toulmin-Smith described her, in an obituary notice—the household moved from Highgate to a drier soil on Bexley Heath in North Kent. Four years or so later, when her younger brother Charles went up to Cambridge, they took up their abode in a house overlooking Parker's Piece. "My father rejoiced in the change," she writes, "and delighted in the society of men keenly interested in scholarship and science with whom it brought him in contact." Some at least of these contacts came to her also, necessarily. For although George Kingsley, who was "a perfect treasure-house of learning," made none of it available for posterity in books, yet he "left enough in manuscript to fill volumes on all manner of branches of obscure learning, mainly on early English literature and Semitic tradition"; and the most complete among these manuscripts was a work on the idea involved in sacrificial rites. But, she says, "I, who for many years was his underworker on that subject, collecting for him accounts given by travellers of sacrificial rites, and views taken on the question by German authors, know that he did not consider it sufficiently complete for publication."<sup>2</sup> It was never her way to magnify her office; and when she says "underworker," it means that between father and daughter

<sup>1</sup> *Notes on Sport and Travel*, p. 206.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 192.

there was something like collaboration. In any case, the task of collecting information would go on while he was absent; and these years of Cambridge life must have been years of most miscellaneous acquisition. She "continued her mathematics, studied Darwin, Huxley, Lubbock and Tylor, and the great principles of modern science" says her father's friend Miss Toulmin-Smith.

Yet whatever she gathered could only be by snatches. The woman's work came far before that of the under-worker to a student of Semitic tradition. "The subsequent part of my history," she says in *M.A.P.*, after she had recounted the scrapes and humours of her girlhood "need not be written at length. It was years of work and watching and anxiety, a narrower life in home interests than ever, and a more hopelessly depressing one, for it was a losing fight with death all the time."

Yet the first defeat was wholly unexpected. On February 5th, 1892, she, who had been sitting up all night with her mother as usual, went upstairs with her father's letters. There was no answer to her knocking, and she found him in bed, having died in his sleep with no premonitory illness. Six weeks later, her mother died also :—

And then, when the fight was lost, when there were no more odd jobs anyone wanted me to do at home, I, out of my life in books, found something to do that my father had cared for, something for which I had been taught German, so that I could do for him odd jobs in it.

It was the study of early religion and law, and for it I had to go to West Africa, and I went there, proceeding on the even tenour of my way, doing odd jobs and trying to understand things, pursuing knowledge under difficulties with unbroken devotion.

The rest of this book must be merely an expansion of that last paragraph in her brief sketch for T. P. O'Connor's paper. Yet perhaps a note may be added. One great force which drags men and women hither and thither had no hold on Mary Kingsley; and she said so explicitly for a reason that was entirely characteristic.

She had made friends with me because I was one of the few journalists who studied West African affairs; but her friendships were never limited in their purpose or their sympathies, and when I sent her a novel I had just written, she told me first of all what she did like about it—matters entirely irrelevant to its quality as a novel—and then she put her lack of appreciation of the rest into the form of an apologetic confidence:—

I make the confession humbly quite as I would make the confession of being deaf or blind, I know nothing myself of love. I have read about it. I see from men and women's action that the thing exists just like I read about it in books, but I have never been in love, nor has anyone ever been in love with me. It is an imperfection—no doubt—it only gives me a second-hand sort of understanding of the reason why your people do these things; it has its compensations, no doubt—it saves me from being bored with things that would heavily bore most people.

As usual, she slid off into broad humour, setting down her belief that this disability of hers was due to "the reckless way in which my relations have drawn on the family account," and to explain how her limitations had been utilised from early days by certain cousins ("and uncommonly pretty girls they were then"):—

When a young man was rather distracted in his mind as to *which*, I was simply *invaluable* to go out with him—a sort of pause in affairs. . . . I am useful occasionally, but that is all—very useful a few months ago when on calling on a friend she asked me to go up to her bedroom and see her new hat—a suggestion that staggered me, I knowing her opinion of mine in such matters. But I went, and she flung herself on the bed in tears. "What ever!" "Oh," said she, "Harry is on the roof." "Who's Harry?" said I; "which roof? Why?" "Oh, don't be silly," she said; "he had to go."

The letter did not complete this adventure of an unauthorised *fiancé*, but I am sure she got him off the roof and enjoyed the experience riotously.

Seriously, however, there is no doubt that this deficiency or limitation of hers was an advantage for the work

she undertook. I could imagine her depicting with Rabelaisian gusto the set of complications in which under the same conditions another sort of lady might have been involved. But she avoided all such discussions. She could be frank as any anthropologist about sex when it was a matter of anthropology, but as a subject for ordinary conversation it was not in her repertory. I think perhaps that much of what seemed eccentric in her sprung out of a desire to avoid the appearance of mannishness; yet there was no need. Her friendships were as much with women as with men, and neither man nor woman who was her friend ever thought of her as less than perfectly a noble woman.

## CHAPTER II

### WHY SHE WENT TO WEST AFRICA

MARY KINGSLEY was thirty when her parents died. For the last six years she had been in touch with some congenial society at Cambridge, but on the whole her life had been most narrowly confined. In 1888 a friend—probably Miss Lucy Toulmin-Smith—took her to Paris for a week. Except for this she had never left England.

Yet her father's example and talk had so wrought upon her that when the long strain of nursing was ended, her first use of freedom was to make a trip to the Canaries. Not many young women, left for the first time alone, would have pushed so far afield; but there was in the blood of the Kingsleys what one writing of her called the "nostalgia for unknown lands," and more specially for the tropical sun. Her father in many climes, her uncle Henry in Australia, had basked their fill in it. In Charles Kingsley, instinct was thwarted by the call of English duties; yet readers of his *Life* will remember his delight in the West Indies when at last he got the chance to gratify this deep-seated craving.

All we know of Mary Kingsley's visit to the Canaries in 1892 is what can be gathered from her brief description of the islands in her *Travels*. She tells us then that she had seen them five times, four times in passing, but on the first occasion "spending many weeks on them," so that she "could an if she would—or if space allowed—have discoursed at large on the subject of their beauties, their trade and industries." All her work is evidence that this is no mere ornamental expression; for she travelled to learn, and trade and industries lay near the

heart of her study. Moreover, Canary provided her first introduction not only to trade, but also to traders. The introductory chapter of her *West African Studies* was really written for her *Travels*, and it contains this significant passage:—

I need not discourse on the Grand Canary; there are many better descriptions of that lovely island, and likewise of its sister, Teneriffe, than I could give you. I could indeed give you an account of these islands, particularly "when a West Coast boat is in from the South," that would show another side of the island life; but I forbear, because it would, perhaps, cause you to think ill of the West Coaster unjustly; for the West Coaster, when he lands on the island of the Grand Canary, homeward bound, and realises he has a good reasonable chance to see his home and England again, is not in a normal state, and prone to fall under the influence of excitement, and display emotions that he would not dream of either on the West Coast itself or in England. Indeed, it is not too much to say that on the Canary Islands a good deal of the erroneous prejudice against West Africa is formed; but this is not the place to go into details on the subject.<sup>1</sup>

That prejudice expressed itself briefly in the generic term "palm-oil ruffians" which the English public (condensing the information gathered from missionaries and officials) applied to those Europeans with whom Mary Kingsley most habitually associated, from whom she learned most, and with whom and for whom she took her stand.

Details on their manners, copious and eloquent, will be found throughout all her works; and they certainly were not the class of persons with whom a lone young Englishwoman coming straight from a university town would have been expected to form acquaintance. But there is no doubt she formed it, nor of the impression it conveyed. We read at the beginning of her *Travels*:—

When in the Canaries in 1892, I used to smile, I regretfully own, at the conversation of a gentleman from the Gold Coast

<sup>1</sup> *West African Studies*, p. 10.

who was up there recruiting after a bad fever. His conversation consisted largely of anecdotes of friends of his, and nine times in ten he used to say, "He's dead now."<sup>1</sup>

Such were the allurements that traffickers in West Africa held out to one who from the sunny slopes of Grand Canary was casting eyes towards the equator and the untravelled world.

But, meantime, while she rested after the strain of that long nursing, and the shock of those two deaths, the side of her nature that was a poet's took its fill of delight. It is not the observation of one just passing by these islands that finds expression in the passage from which I quote a few lines:—

The general colour of the mountains of Grand Canary and Lanzarote, which rise peak after peak until they culminate in the Pico de las Nieves, some 6,000 feet high, is a yellowish red, and the air which lies among their rocky crevices and swathes their softer sides is a lovely lustrous blue. I used to fancy that if I could only have collected some of it in a bottle, and taken it home to show my friends, it would have come out as a fair blue violet cloud in the grey air of Cambridge.<sup>2</sup>

I think, from the last words, that this was observed during that first visit in 1892. But after those weeks of rest among such beauty, she went home and transferred her household goods and her brother's from Cambridge to a flat at 100, Addison Road—doubtless for his convenience, since the idea of putting herself first was one to which her upbringing had never tended. Thereafter—again presumably by reason of his movements, for he also was a restless creature and had decided on Eastern travel—a new situation presented itself. As she tells us at the opening of her *Travels*:—

It was in 1893 that for the first time in my life, I found myself in possession of five or six months which were not heavily forestalled, and feeling like a boy with a new half-crown, I lay about in my mind, as Mr. Bunyan would say, as to what to do with them. "Go and learn your tropics," said Science. Where on

<sup>1</sup> *Travels*, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

earth am I to go? I wondered, for tropics are tropics, wherever found; so I got down an atlas and saw that either South America or West Africa must be my destination, for the Malayan region was too far off and too expensive.

Her serious purpose, which she does not state here, was to carry on those studies in which she had been her father's "underworker." Probably she hoped to complete some of his work, for, as her Memoir of him shows, it was a lasting regret that he should have left no more permanent memorial of his studies. Her first notion had been—so we are told by his friend and hers, Miss Lucy Toulmin-Smith, in the *Dictionary of National Biography*—to pursue research in the East; but this, as she says, was too expensive, and her visit to the Canaries had suggested another way. There was no other place in the world where religion and law could be studied in so primitive a condition, so little affected by European contact, as in West Africa.

There was this further consideration. Her father, she says in a lecture quoted in the Introductory Notice to the second edition of her *West African Studies* "had travelled far and wide, and knew the natives of the South Sea Islands and the Red Indians of North America personally." The East was not known to him, but "he was a scholar in Semitic literature and could easily find out from books what those peoples and the East Indians and Chinese thought about his favourite subject. . . . What the Africans thought about religion and law he could not so easily find out, because he had not visited western Equatorial Africa and because the Africans have not, like the Chinese or the Indians, a great written literature which you can consult. There are a few Europeans who have carefully studied African ideas, but very few. Chief among them is our own Sir A. B. Ellis and the German doctors Baumann, Buchholtz, Bastian, Köhler and Habbe Schleidem, but these eminent men had not given attention to many points essential for my father's work, so I, knowing how much



my father wished that book finished, went out after his death to West Africa, where all authorities agreed that Africans were at their wildest and worst. It was no desire to get killed and eaten that made me go and associate with the tribes with the worst reputation for cannibalism and human sacrifice, but just because such tribes were the best for me to study from what they meant by doing such things."

A secondary purpose was suggested by her friends, Dr. Guillemard of Cambridge and Dr. Günther of the British Museum, who encouraged her to collect specimens. Dr. Günther wrote after her death to her friend Mrs. J. R. Green :—

Mary Kingsley had not received any training in, or possessed any special qualifications for, Natural History pursuits. But she was impelled by an earnest desire to contribute, to the best of her abilities, towards the advancement of every kind of knowledge. She possessed an extraordinary gift of observation, and she noted a number of facts in the life of animals, of which only a small proportion are recorded in her published writings. She consulted me as an old friend and correspondent of her uncle Charles as to the branch of Zoology in which she could collect with some prospect of gaining useful results. We finally decided that she should devote her attention to the fishes of the rivers and lakes visited by her. Collecting fishes in spirit is always a laborious and somewhat expensive task, requiring much care and patience. Yet considering the slenderness of her means and her outfit, she succeeded in bringing home a good collection of admirably preserved specimens, a fair proportion being new to science, and all valuable additions to any ichthyological museum. Her success was entirely due to her judicious selection of the specimens, and to her indefatigable energy which overcame all obstacles.

There is, however, another aspect of the matter which must not be hidden, yet which I, for instance, who had the honour to know her well, never guessed at till, thirty years after her death, I found it disclosed in one of her letters. I knew, indeed, that her habitual jesting was a mask, emphasising the deep seriousness which appeared always when she dropped the mask, as often happened,

but concealing also an extreme melancholy. Of that I became aware not in her talk, but in her letters, for she always spoke out more fully on paper. Yet as I see now, although we talked and wrote very freely of things that were near to us, they were always things impersonal—causes, some fight or other. Of herself, of her life as a simple human being, we never spoke: it was as if she existed only in her purposes: her health was a mere matter of the efficiency of an instrument. I never asked myself then how the sudden break-up of her early life had affected her: indeed, I never knew how sudden and complete it had been. Yet when one thinks of it, her entire life for thirty years had been devoted to the service of her parents; they filled her whole horizon; and when they died, almost together, the bottom must have dropped out of her world. There remained her brother, and she was at his service; but he was not, I think, an easy man to serve and he was a lonely wanderer. She had lived so much for others that when those others had gone, nothing was left to her.

This was fully present to her mind when in May 1899 she, being then at the height of her public notoriety, was asked to contribute the sketch of her life to a newspaper which I have already quoted. Having agreed to do the thing, she began of course jesting; but before she came to the recital of her youthful experiments with powder and such-like, she had this to say:—

My life can be written in a very few lines. It is, and has been, and will be, one wholly without romance or variety in the proper sense of the word; it has just been one long grind of work, work worth doing, but never well done, and never successful in gaining the thing aimed at, a perpetual Waterloo in a microscopic way.

Why this has been is perfectly clear; it arises from my having no personal individuality of my own whatsoever. I have always lived in the lives of other people, whose work was heavy for them; and, apart from that, I have lived a life of my own, strewn about among non-human things.

So much as that she was willing to tell the public; but a couple of months earlier, in March of that year, she had gone a great deal further in her confidences to a man who had touched her imagination, because he was of her own freemasonry, among those who willingly go down into the shadow of death, as were her friends the traders. But he was also, unlike them, a man on her own level of intellectual culture; and in the friendship which he and she had recently formed, she had found him like-minded with her on the problems nearest to her heart. To him then she wrote, with an intensity of revelation that I have not seen elsewhere:—

The fact is I am no more a human being than a gust of wind is. I have never had a human individual life. I have always been the doer of odd jobs—and lived in the joys, sorrows and worries of other people. It never occurs to me that I have any right to do anything more than now and then sit and warm myself at the fires of real human beings. I am grateful to them for letting me do this. I am fond of them, but I don't expect them to be fond of me, and its just as well I don't—for there is not one of them who has ever cared for me apart from my services. Yes, that is why I offered to help you, Sir. I am no better than the human beings I deal with in the matter of feeling. When they are happy and comfortable and smug, I lose all interest in them—as well as they in me—it is quite mutual, save that I have more reason to be grateful to them, than they to me, for it is through them I know this most amusing human world; but it is the non-human world I belong to myself. My people are mangroves, swamps, rivers, and the sea and so on—we understand each other. They never give me the dazzles with their goings on, like human beings do by theirs repeatedly. My life has been a comic one: dead tired and feeling no one had need of me any more, when my Mother and Father died within six weeks of each other in '92, and my Brother went off to the East, I went down to West Africa to die. West Africa amused me and was kind to me and was scientifically interesting—and did not want to kill me just then. I am in no hurry. I don't care one way or the other, for a year or so. Well then my Brother came back and I came home to look after him domestically as long as he wants me to do so. I must do it, it is duty: the religion I was brought up in. When he does not want me, I go back to West Africa for

the third time, perfectly content to stay there if it chooses. It is not the restful kind of place I thought it—it is just as fond of giving me odd jobs as up here has been, but take it as a whole, I like the sort of Englishman that gives me odd jobs to do in West Africa better than I like the people in London drawing-rooms. They seem better worth bothering after.

In plain words, then, when she found herself lonely after that double bereavement, life did not seem worth going on with; and what she heard in Canary gave a possible solution. In West Africa she would find material for study; she might also find a way out of life.

But she went about her business like a most rational human being. No European could have lived through her experiences without rigorous precautions and she observed them. Above all, she resisted the temptation to which European soldiers most readily succumb, of quenching thirst when it seems more terrible than the risk of disease. "Unboiled water is my *ibet*," she says—that is to say, the thing which was taboo to her; and she lets us feel more than once how much this abstinence cost her. Moreover, when she found her "odd jobs," on her return, they made a reason for existence, in England, a fight to be fought to the last. None the less, it is clear that she always had in the forefront of her mind the desire to get once more to West Africa; and in the background, I believe, was the thought that some day West Africa would arrange for her to be done with the painful business of living, which offered her celebrity, power even, but never heart's content.

## CHAPTER III

### WEST AFRICA AND EUROPE IN THE 'NINETIES

It was in August 1893 that Mary Kingsley set off on her first expedition, a stranger, almost without introductions, going to a region of which the world at large knew very little but its dangers; and these were greater even than the outside world knew. She, however, plunged straight in, going where the risks were greatest and, in a land where European women were scarcely known, travelling under conditions that few European men had to face. By what self-discipline she contrived to stand the physical ordeal, I have suggested; but this is only part of the truth. She fell in love with the adventure, the strange savage country and its strange people, black and white: and the enjoyment carried her through.

That first journey began far south—at St. Paul de Loanda, in Portuguese territory—and came up through the Congo Free State into Congo Français (her principal field); it ended in British territory at Old Calabar. It was over by January 1894, and she brought back with her so considerable a collection of specimens that the British Museum provided her with a collector's outfit for the next expedition, which she was already preparing. For after her first return, as after her second, the whole purpose of her mind was to return to the dangers, the hardships, the squalor and the uncivilised way of life, which had won her heart.

On this second journey she saw more of the British possessions, looking in at Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast, and spending several months on the Oil Rivers.

But the main part of her exploration again lay in Congo Français, where native institutions had been less disturbed than anywhere else on the Coast. One of these institutions was cannibalism.

Before her wanderings were ended she had visited also the German country of Cameroon and had added her name to the list of those who had reached the crater of Mungo Mah Lobeh, 14,000 feet up.

She came back to England at the end of November 1895, and the fame of her doings had gone before her. *The Times* published a long interview in which appeared some of her adventurous experiences; and early in 1896 she was lecturing before the Geographical Societies in Edinburgh and in Liverpool, and soon was much pressed to write for the magazines. But the Macmillan firm, who had published for Charles Kingsley, had persuaded her to attempt a volume on her travels, and by the end of 1896 it was published. Few authors have been embarrassed by having so much too much to tell, and she herself describes it as a "word swamp of a book." Yet its popularity was immediate; and within a few weeks she was reckoning on the possibility of travelling with rather less fierce discomfort on her next exploration; for she expected to be back on the Coast by the end of 1897.

The nature of her book, the circumstances of the times, and her own nature decided otherwise. West Africa was then being parcelled out among claimants representing the great European powers; and she found herself the champion of interests which she had defended in her book, and the assailant of tendencies which she condemned. What she wanted was "to go and skylark about in West Africa"; to be an explorer and a student. What she had to do was to develop and defend her ideas on the subject of the government of Africa, the first of which was that to govern Africa wisely you must understand the native mind. For in West Africa the white man, though he might establish rule, could not replace

the black. European rule, she held, unless it were to be merely destructive must be based on justice; and there can only be justice where there is understanding.

In short, her sense of duty, of loyalty and of honour, made her what she least desired to be, a propagandist.

In order to explain her activities it is necessary, I think, that some very brief outline should be given of what was then recent West African history.

Mary Kingsley used to say that for forty years after Waterloo the whole of West Africa from the Gambia to the Congo was England's if she had chosen to take it. But throughout this period the governing powers in England were little concerned to extend their interests in West Africa. The Coast was known, and had been known for centuries; the string of posts dotted along it which had been used as bases of operations for the slave-trade became bases of operations against it from 1820 onwards; also, they reverted to their original purpose of factories for barter against tropical products. Up till 1821, the settlements were governed by a Board of nine representing the Company of Merchants, and Government allowed this Board some £10,000 a year to maintain its ports for the security of British trade. Then after the abolition of slavery, the whole fell into disorder, the Crown took over control, and succeeded so ill that it was ready to abandon the Gold Coast. But, as Mary Kingsley writes in her *Story of West Africa*, "the English traders held on and refused to leave in the man-of-war sent out to fetch them away, and so saved the Gold Coast for the Empire and upheld the honour of England in its old promises to the natives made in treaties." Thereafter a London Committee of Merchants assumed charge and appointed George Maclean as Governor, who from 1830 to 1847, with only an annual grant of £4000, ruled to such purpose that he established a virtual protectorate over a very considerable area. The essential factor in his success was that he established

the principle of "trying in concert with native chiefs cases in which natives were already concerned, according to native law, as far as it could be applied in harmony with civilised ideas of justice, a thing which has done infinite good service in West Africa and made the name of England beloved and powerful there."<sup>1</sup>

Even these few notes suggest Mary Kingsley's stand on this whole question. England's right to be in Africa was the right to trade, in order that people in England might find a market for their goods; and every trader in West Africa was serving England at the risk of his own life. Traders had been the pioneers; those who protected trade were also the upholders of England's duty to maintain justice wherever England went. This, she held, could be done only by harmonising the native customs and laws with English administration, a task not impossible; for in great measure the principles of justice were common to humanity. And so a man like Maclean was a hero to Mary Kingsley, all the more because slander at home assailed him and he died vindicated but broken-hearted.

After him the succession of progressive work, carried out for England with scant encouragement, passes from official to merchant, and concerns a different region. Behind all the coast settlements lay the vast forest belt, untraversed by Europeans: but since 1797, when Mungo Park returned from his exploration of the Upper Niger, it was known that behind the forest belt the great river flowed through regions where were populous states and cities, trafficking across the desert to Tripoli. But the course of the Niger was still unknown, and explorer after explorer failed to track it, though Denham and Clapperton, going in at Tripoli, reached Timbuctoo and the great Hausa towns, Sokoto and Kano. At last, after Clapperton had died in the interior, his servant Lander completed the task in 1830, coming downstream from Boussa, past the rapids, to reach the sea at

<sup>1</sup> *Story of West Africa*, p. 61.



Brass. Thereupon Macgregor Laird, a Liverpool merchant, brother of the famous shipbuilder John Laird, decided to fit out an expedition and open the Niger to trade. But of forty-eight Europeans engaged in that exploration, thirty-nine perished—Lander among them. Other surveys, supported by Government, were almost as disastrous; but individual explorers, notably Barth, the greatest of them all, reported on the wealth of the Hausa cities, then ruled by the Fulahs, a pastoral race who, scarcely two generations earlier, had subjugated the trading and agricultural Hausas. In 1853 Macgregor Laird, still undiscouraged, launched a new venture with a screw steamer specially constructed; and this time success came. They reached the confluence of the Niger and its great affluent the Benué and pushed far up the latter river before turning back to reach Liverpool without a man lost. In 1856 Laird attempted to establish a regular steamer service and got a subsidy from Government, who went so far as to appoint Dr. Baikie, leader of the earlier expedition, as their consular representative at Lokoja, where Niger and Benué join. The work went on, indefatigably, though without commercial success, till Laird died in 1861, and till Baikie was forced in 1864 by health to come home from the settlement at Lokoja, which under his auspices had become “a little kingdom, a town of refuge, and an encouraging example to all chiefs round of good government and the quiet growth of prosperity.”<sup>1</sup> In 1868 Government withdrew its representative and Great Britain was left represented on the Niger only by unorganised and unprotected traders.

This was in accord with the declared policy of Parliament. In 1865 a Committee of the House of Commons, though recognising that it was not possible to withdraw the British Government wholly or immediately from its commitments on the West African coast, reported that all further extension of country or new treaties offering

<sup>1</sup> *Story of West Africa*, p. 147.

any protection to native tribes would be inexpedient, and that the object should be ultimate withdrawal from all settlements, except probably Sierra Leone, which was wanted as a coaling station. Parliament adopted this as a Resolution, and it governed official policy for twenty years.

But this policy was resisted by the traders and also by the missionaries engaged on the coast. Moreover, the action of other European states finally determined England to secure markets which would otherwise be wrested from her.

Long before this, in 1857, Faidherbe had begun the conquest of Senegal; and already in the 'sixties it was perceived that France aimed at linking her possessions in North Africa to those in the West, though few then believed it possible. The work was interrupted by the Franco-Prussian War; but after that tragic interlude Bismarck's policy desired a safety-valve for French energies, and colonial enterprise gave chances for an army smarting with defeat to gain some compensation. France's aim, steadily pursued, was henceforward to establish herself on the Upper Niger and its affluents by advancing from her base in Senegal. But in the 'seventies no one in England was concerned about this process. It was a different development that at last broke up British apathy.

In 1876 King Leopold of Belgium held a conference in Brussels to consider the best means of opening up Central Africa. This proposal led to the formation of an International Association for the exploration and civilisation of Central Africa—with headquarters in Brussels. East Africa was first in view, but in 1878 Stanley's discoveries of the Congo's course suggested a new field. A Belgian colonel was sent out to survey, and Stanley's services were secured, the avowed objective being the formation of a negro kingdom or confederacy with King Leopold for its head. The French, however, took alarm, and de Brazza, racing Stanley to peg out

claims on the Congo, succeeded in securing the right bank for France. Portugal also, long established in this region of Africa, felt her claims threatened and appealed to Great Britain for help. The upshot was a Conference of the Powers in Berlin which gave official recognition to the Congo Free State under the personal sovereignty of King Leopold, who thus found a million square miles placed at his absolute disposal.

In the meantime, France was pushing hard her career of conquest on the Upper Niger, while Germany, stirred to rivalry, put in claims on the coast which England did not resist. Thus the Germans acquired territory on either side of the Lower Niger, in Togoland and in Cameroon. Great Britain meanwhile, so far as her Government was concerned, did nothing; although, as Mary Kingsley put it, "there is no raw material market in the world equal to West Africa; and there is no part of West Africa, take it all in all, equal to the region of the River Niger. France had already secured much of that highway: Germany decided to secure the rest."<sup>1</sup>

But they met a man. There were still trading-posts on the Lower Niger, both French and British, but wholly unorganised, until George Taubmann Goldie, a young engineer officer with previous African experience in the Sudan, came out to see the region where some of his family had been investing money in one of the trading companies. He returned to England; "but," says Mary Kingsley, writing of the man who was her friend, and, one may say plainly, her hero—

he had seen on that 1877 voyage enough of the Niger to realise the worth of it to Britain and the necessity of securing it for her. Whenever an idea of this kind gets into the head of one of that particular kind of Englishmen he sets about carrying the thing out; and, according to the amount of statesmanship he has in addition to his other abilities, he succeeds. Sir George Goldie commenced by inaugurating the principle of amalgamation among the trading firms already working in the Niger. . .

<sup>1</sup> *Story of West Africa*, p. 150.

This group of Englishmen Sir George Goldie welded into the National African Company, and in 1886 he gained for it a Royal Charter.<sup>1</sup>

This gave power to administer as well as to trade.

Before that, however, much work had been done. Sir George Goldie's aims (it is simpler to give him the title which he received later) were directed above all to gaining a foothold in the great Hausa States stretching from Lake Tchad to the Middle Niger and across it. In 1884 Joseph Thomson was sent up to make treaties of friendship and commerce by which the Fulah emirs—men of high Mohammedan culture—pledged themselves not to sign any such treaties with any other European state. Fortified with these, Goldie pressed his case at the Berlin Conference; a British sphere of influence was recognised in the Niger region by international authority; and when the Company became chartered as "the Royal Niger Company," it had the right to be taken as fully representative of the British Government. It pushed its work assiduously. But the French, further up the Niger, were now also manifestly striking out in the direction of Lake Tchad, and no British Government could disregard the menace. One may say that from 1885 onward the struggle for "spheres of influence," and therefore for the right of occupation, definitely began.

In 1890 France and England agreed to limit their action respectively to north and south of an imaginary line drawn from Say on the Niger to Barrua on Lake Tchad. But such agreements respecting regions mainly unknown are very precarious, and there was uneasiness when in 1891 Colonel Monteil made a journey from the Niger to Kano and to Sokoto, at the head of a small escort—small, but a body of French native troops. Meantime the situation was complicated by the existence of two formidable African adventurers, both of them

<sup>1</sup> *Story of West Africa*, p. 155.

ex-slaves, and both at the head of predatory forces. Rabeh to the east and south of Lake Tchad was still far removed from contact with the Niger Company's small body of troops; but Samory with his Sofas<sup>1</sup> was at large in the territory between the Upper Niger, France's sphere, and the very old British colony of Sierra Leone, behind which a Protectorate had been formed by treaties with native tribes. In 1892 a band of the Sofas were spreading desolation and capturing slaves in this Protectorate and a British column was despatched through still unexplored country to drive them out. The force, some three hundred strong, partly of English-speaking West Indian negroes, partly of native police, was suddenly attacked before dawn, at a place called Waima, by the fire of repeating-rifles, and many casualties were incurred before the replying volleys silenced their assailants. It was found then that a French lieutenant with ten spahis had attacked the camp believing it to be that of the Sofas. All his men were killed but one; he himself fortunately, though mortally wounded, lived long enough to explain the error. But it was a formidable illustration of the risks to the peace of Europe; and it was only the beginning. For it illustrated also how abstract and theoretical was the influence of any European power, in regions like this one, where no white man had ever before set foot. Indeed at Waima it was disputed whether the British or the French had overstepped the boundary.

This clash led to no serious consequences; the boundary was surveyed and settled; but it was typical of the state of things that behind the oldest English possession on the Coast, within the sphere over which protectorate was claimed, there should be territory only a few marches inland which had not been entered by any white man. The ambitious powers, to whose number Germany was now added, began to advance the theory that "effective occupation" was needed to justify claims

<sup>1</sup> That is "foot soldiers."

to ownership; and the great area which lay between the Middle Niger and the forest belt became the object of desire. This was the hinterland of the British Gold Coast: further East towards the Niger's bend, it comprised territories on which the Niger Company had claims. Into it France pushed down expeditions from her inland bases on the Upper Niger; but she was also completing the conquest of Dahomey, and parties from here pushed inward from the coast line, while the Germans from Togoland alongside Dahomey sent out their representatives also in the quest of treaties with native chiefs.

England did the same, from the Gold Coast; but there was an obstacle to her free movement from the Coast. Behind it, the Ashanti kingdom, which had been conquered in 1874 but left standing independent, blocked the way. In 1896 claims dating from that time for a war indemnity were pressed; an expedition was sent up which dethroned the King, Prempeh, and the road was now open; but delay had been dangerous. Small British, French and German military forces roved about in the hinterland setting up claims not perfectly understood by the native chiefs, disputing each others' claims, even on occasion pulling down each others' flags, till in 1898 grave journals talked menacingly of war. At last a conference in Paris settled the disputed frontiers and left each power free to establish authority within the part assigned to it. A new epoch in the development of Africa began. But in the hinterland of the Gold Coast England was obliged to go back on her word pledged to a native king, and the king lost his kingship. On the Niger, it was held necessary to sweep away the Royal Niger Company and with it Sir George Goldie, the man who had secured for England by far her most important possessions in West Africa.

All this process Mary Kingsley watched as a passionately interested onlooker, and she found no theme for pride in it, but greatly the reverse. Her journeys brought her into contact both with French and German

officials; and in 1893, when she was first on the Coast, as again in 1895, the forward push made by these two powers met no answering energy, except from the Niger Company. Yet she bore no ill-will to either French or Germans, but rather testified her frank admiration for brave men's work. If she warned England against the consequences of being outdone in energy and resourcefulness, there was no ungenerous carping at the rivals who threatened the interests which this proud Englishwoman was most anxious to protect.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE BEGINNING OF HER ADVENTURES

ONE may begin now to recount in some detail that part of Mary Kingsley's life in which she was most completely herself—for human beings are most themselves when they are playing. A year and a half covers it; beginning with August 1893, when she set out for her first adventure in the unknown, and ending with November 30th, 1895, when she landed in Liverpool from her second journey and became at once a kind of public personage.

She has left no regular record of the first journey, but some facts about it can be gleaned from her books.

Instructed guidance was hard to come by, but warnings against the dangers were universal; and the one man of her acquaintance who had lived on the Coast for seven years wound up his advice respecting sun-stroke and the use of quinine by counselling her to "get some introductions to the Wesleyans; they are the only people on the Coast who have got a hearse with feathers." We know also that she travelled by choice on a cargo-boat—not one of the best ships of the fleet. These, she wrote, "are well enough to come home by, but you must go on a steamer that has her saloon aft on your first trip out, or you will never understand West Africa." Her own first and chief instructor was Captain Murray—of whom she speaks often, and always with reverence.

"He saw then," she wrote, "that my mind was full of errors that must be eradicated if I was going to deal with the Coast successfully; and so he eradicated those errors and replaced them with sound knowledge from his



own stores collected during an acquaintance with the Coast of over thirty years. The education he has given me has been of the greatest value to me, and I sincerely hope to make many more voyages under him, for I well know he has still much to teach and I to learn."

One gathers some notion of this mentor's appearance, because when the cheap edition was preparing, she proposed to include a certain group. "Captain Murray's photograph is in it and he wants me to publish it. I think it ought to be done because it is taken from the right side: the nose having been flattened in a fight makes the point of view from which he is taken rather important for artistic purposes."

No doubt this old sea-trafficker could tell her much to help her on land, where the cargoes he carried went to and came from. But, above all, he taught her seamanship. She had the sea in her blood, and probably in this art he was not her first instructor. Anybody who reads her books will find that her acquaintance with navigation was extensive and peculiar; she was modest about her other attainments to the point of humility, but she does not conceal her pride in having learnt to manage a canoe on the Ogowé river, "pace, style, steering and all, all same for one as an Ogowé African." When it came to ships, she guarded her reputation for seamanship perhaps even more jealously than for scientific accuracy—though about that also she was firm. Witness this letter to George Macmillan, when her book of *Travels* was in preparation and the scientist who revised it had taken on himself to alter some of her expressions:—

I see quite clearly that I cannot publish this sort of thing. I am very sorry but it cannot be done, for I am going down the Coast again and I have no character to lose as a literary person, but I have got a very good character to lose as a practical seaman and an honest observer of facts on the West Coast, and I cannot put my name to this sort of newspaper article or lecture to a panorama affair; and if my log is published as I have written it,

I feel I can face any man. If it is published as it is corrected, I may be able to face the General Public, but *How* could I face Captain Murray after having said, Captain Heldt housed me? Now to house means to lower a mast to half its length, and then secure it by lashing its heel to the mast below! As I dare say you know, and I assure you, Captain Heldt *never* lashed my heels, nor lowered me to half my length. Similarly I say you can go across Forçados bar drawing 18 ft. The Dr. says it has 18 foot of water on it at low water. It has not. You can go—because you can drive through a foot or two of mud. I fear you will think these things of no importance, but they are important to me. I have taken vessels of 2000 tons across that Bar and up the Forçados creeks as a pilot, three times. I should never get the chance of taking another if I published such rot, and I would rather take a 200-ton vessel up a creek than write any book.

Her printed works contain no record of these feats of piloting, and I dare say none of those who knew her ever heard her mention them. She did not dwell on her achievements; the expression of triumph over having mastered the Ajumba canoe is the only thing I can recall set down with conscious self-satisfaction, and even that comes at the end of several pages devoted to chronicling the entertainment afforded to lookers on by the miscarriage of her first adventures. But the pride in her trusted seamanship was deep in her heart and it cried out indignantly when she was made to speak like a land-lubber. From her raw beginnings she had advanced to the point when a West Coast skipper would trust her with his ship in a difficult channel: that was a decisive expression of the judgment of the only peers she cared about—those who knew the Coast as well as she did, or better.

I could wish that we had a recorded expression from Captain Murray, or some other of her friends in the mercantile marine, concerning this pupil of theirs. Happily we can get a glimpse from the other class of her most valued associates—those who made her education on land. In her Introduction to the *Travels* she tells how, on reaching the tropics, contact with

reality forced her to discard or enlarge many of her "old ideas derived from books and thoughts based on imperfect knowledge":—

The greatest recantation I had to make, I made humbly before I had been three months on the Coast in 1893. It was of my idea of the traders. What I had expected to find them was a very different thing to what I did find them; and of their kindness to me I can never sufficiently speak, for on that voyage I was utterly out of touch with the governmental circles, and utterly dependent on the traders, and the most useful lesson of all the lessons I learnt on the West Coast in 1893 was that I could trust them.<sup>1</sup>

They on their part also had to modify hastily formed ideas:—

On my first voyage out I did not know the Coast, and the Coast did not know me, and we mutually terrified each other. I fully expected to get killed by the local nobility and gentry; they thought I was connected with the World's Women's Temperance Association, and collecting shocking details for subsequent magic-lantern lectures on the liquor traffic; so fearful misunderstandings arose, but we gradually educated each other, and I had the best of the affair; for all I had got to teach them was that I was only a beetle- and ferish-hunter, and so forth, while they had to teach me a new world, and a very fascinating course of study I found it. And whatever the Coast may have to say against me—for my continual desire for hatpins, and other pins, my intolerable habit of getting into water, the abominations full of ants that I brought into their houses, or things emitting at unexpectedly short notice vivid and awful stench— they cannot but say I was a diligent pupil, who honestly tried to learn the lessons they taught me so kindly, though some of those lessons were hard to a person who had never previously been even in a tame bit of tropics, and whose life for many years had been an entirely domestic one in a University town.<sup>2</sup>

I think one can reconstruct what she must have looked like when she impinged upon the consciousness of skippers, first mates, second mates, pursers and boat-swains on ships of the Royal African line, and on that

<sup>1</sup> *Travels*, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

of the traders in West Coast factories. Those of us who came to know her after her book was published knew a woman in the later thirties, matured by strange experience, possessing in a quiet way the confidence bred of success, and fully accustomed to public lecturing. Yet even so there was a shyness about her, as if she were not quite at her ease in the world. Four years earlier, in 1893, when she went out to a strange region, carrying no influential introductions, her widest usage of life had been acquired in the society of Cambridge—a scanty preparation for consorting with West Coast Society in the rough. They, on the other hand, must have been puzzled by the pale rather gaunt young woman, dressed in black, who might have passed for a missionary, but could not be one, or her destination would have been known. It was an odd place for her to be going to, since in the 'nineties, except for a few missionaries, and one or two wives of officials, there were no white women on the Coast. If the ships' officers and passengers decided that she was a collector of evidence for a temperance crusade, it means that they did not like the look of her.

I have said that she was in black, and this was natural then, as she wore mourning. But first or last, I never saw her in any other colour. Ladies in University towns during the last century studiously avoided smartness in their apparel, yet no doubt there were those among them who gave thought to the matter. My feeling about Mary Kingsley is that she wore clothes merely because it was decent to be covered; but in the end, as her personality developed, what began as a covering ended as a disguise. One of her friends, Mrs. St. Loe Strachey, has written of her: "She was upright, carrying her body with a curious stiffness; she looked, with her blue eyes, humorous mouth and fair hair parted in the middle under a black velvet snood, less like an explorer than anyone I ever saw." That is, I may say, a flattering impression of her ordinary appearance: and

I cannot recall the velvet snood. What I remember ineffaceably is the head-dress she habitually wore, which men took for a bonnet but ladies aver to have been a small black fur cap. I am convinced that it accompanied her on all her journeys. So far as I can ascertain, she dressed in Africa as she had dressed in Cambridge; and she dressed in London as she had dressed in Africa. If she ever had an ulterior purpose in arraying herself, it was to avoid looking like the intrepid Englishwoman who had consorted with cannibal natives of Africa. Probably when she came to be famous, the incongruity of her make up amused her; for it was almost farcical. But on her first journey, she certainly dressed as she had always done at home, and chiefly, I am sure, because she was too shy to do otherwise.

One can picture her wandering about the ship, and observing whatever was being done—for the detail of any practical work interested her (had she not been an impassioned student of *The English Mechanic*?), but work on shipboard fascinated. Then, no doubt, she asked questions, and, no doubt, of a surprising kind; for there was nothing in her appearance to suggest theoretical familiarity with the details of seamanship. Yet this she possessed, partly from the talk of her father, who had spent years in ocean-going yachting, and still more from her ceaseless reading of seafaring chronicles. She had the whole literature of buccaneering by heart, and it was "with a thrill of joy" that she first saw Freetown Harbour:—

I knew the place so well. Yes; there were all the bays, Kru, English and Pirate; and the mountains, whose thunder rumbling caused Pedro do Centra to call the place Sierra Leona when he discovered it in 1462. And had not my old friend, Charles Johnson, writing in 1724, given me all manner of information about it during those delicious hours rescued from school books and dedicated to a most contentious study of *A General History of Robberies and Murders of the Most Notorious Pyrates*? That those bays away now on my right hand were "safe and convenient for cleaning and watering"; and so on and there rose up before



MARY II. KINGSLEY, 1895  
*(From an old newspaper illustration)*



my eyes a vision of society ashore here in 1724 that lived "very friendly with the natives—being thirty Englishmen in all; men who in some part of their lives had been either privateering, buccaneering, or pirating, and still retain and have the riots and humours common to that sort of life."<sup>1</sup>

Is it wonderful that Captain Murray should have thought it worth while to bestow instruction on a young lady who came for the first time to the West Coast with a good working knowledge of its harbours? As for the lesser gods on board, men always respond to a woman who takes intelligent interest in their occupations and probably the more so if it is the last thing in the world they expected of her. I think it possible that they tried to shock her, for her make-up was old-maidish. Captain Murray would not have done this, and the first mate, to judge by casual references, seems merely to have poured into her ears the woes of a ship's husband who tries to keep his vessel's appearance smart. But references to second mates and pursers generally are concerned with their flow of language. Indeed, having observed somewhere that the best way to acquire "trade English" (the lingua franca of the Coast) is to listen to a second mate in charge of Kru boys stowing cargo, she admits that she was warned against being in earshot on any such occasion. But in the first place it is hard to shock an anthropologist; further, Mary Kingsley was not new to such explosions. "Where does this child get its language from?" her father once demanded, having suddenly seized her and carried her horizontally downstairs. "Not from me," Mrs. Kingsley said firmly. George Kingsley deposited his offspring and retired with dignity, saying, "Certainly not from me." "The problem remains unsolved," continues her account. But her father was, as she lets us know, a choleric man and a student of antique literature.

Though Mary Kingsley's expressions in talk, in correspondence and in print were highly pictorial and unconventional, I never knew her to use what could be called

<sup>1</sup> *West African Studies*, pp. 5, 31.



bad language—except indeed now and then by way of quotation. But it would be idle to deny that she took delight in it as a connoisseur. “My parrot and myself have picked up several new bad words, which was unnecessary for either of us,” she wrote to me after a house-moving which had been “a lively representation of chaos.” It was all part of her love for riotous and exuberant vitality; and though her casual quotations range from Euripides to Milton, and come down to Stevenson, three-fourths of the whole are either from Mr. Kipling (generally at his slangiest), or, above all, from Dickens. Life was what she was in love with, and low life by preference:—

“There is something about Clifton which is inexpressibly awful,” she wrote to me when I had been visiting that home of gentility. “Nothing enables me to survive even an afternoon call there but a carouse in the back slums of Bristol in company with an ex-ship’s carpenter and his wife and her sister, who plays divinely on the haircomb—and some miscellaneous friends who drop in.”

I do not know whether such company found itself the more at ease with her by reason of the most disconcerting of all her characteristics. Her voice was cultivated and delightful, a flexible contralto with all the possibilities of a chuckle in it. But she always, or almost always, dropped her h’s. I can only account for this by supposing that just as she derived her power of vivid expression from that tempestuous Ulysses her father, so she got her voice and her pronunciation from the mother to whom she gave so many years of loving attendance.

Anyhow, there she was from the first, this thin, shy, quiet-spoken young woman in black, turning up at the most unlikely moments on shipboard, or out of the bush, “unheralded in a dilapidated state,” and saying, with an apologetic twinkle, that it was “only me.” So

at least I gather from a letter written to her publisher when the notices of her *Travels* began to come in:—

. . . I found my nicest review waiting for me in the shape of a letter from an old trader now in Canary because of fever, and sent to another old trader in Liverpool, but I fear you cannot print it in the advertisements. He says "Who would have thought after seeing her play bob cherry with sharks on Lagos Bar she was anything but an Holy Terror? I saw her that way first when she came to Bonny and I had to learn her over again and made up my mind she was a fine lady but, etc., etc., and when I heard they were making a fuss over her, I thought she had a rare hard time on the Coast, and the Coast will catch it; and now I have read her book right through and find it is our own Only me; but how the . . . she got to know the truth I'm . . ." "Only me," I may remark, is one of my many nicknames.

She says of her first voyage that its details were withheld as being "more amusing than instructive." But she "saw more than enough during that voyage" to make her recognise that there was "any amount of work for her worth doing" down there; and indeed in her record of the later journey there is constant reference back to things observed in 1893 and to "my beloved South-west Coast." She began in the Portuguese territory, and, as some of her letters to George Macmillan show, learned a smattering of that language—enough, anyhow, to swear in or to be polite in. Then, working north, she saw something of the Congo Free State, not enough to justify her to herself in writing about it, but enough to determine her never to set foot there again until it had passed under some other system of rule. In French Congo she found herself in conditions that were entirely to her mind. Here she met also one of the most intellectually gifted among the English traders, Mr. R. E. Dennett, who had written there his book, *Seven Years among the Fjort*, and to whose later volume, *Folklore of the Fjort*, she at the height of her fame contributed an introduction. From this I quote her description of the class to which Mr. Dennett belonged.

The position of the trader towards the native is such as to make his information and observations particularly valuable to the ethnologist. The trader is not intent on altering the native culture to a European one; but he is intent on understanding the thing as it stands, so that he may keep at peace with the natives himself and induce them to keep peace with each other, for on peace depends the prosperity of West African regions in the main. We have not any tribe on the West Coast that subsists by war; we have no slave-raiding tribes that are in touch with the coast trader; but we have a series of middlemen-tribes through whose hands the trade from the interior passes to the Coast.

It is, she says, most interesting to study the relationship between the natives and individual white traders, such as Mr. Dennett, in regions like the French Congo, where the chiefs of the middlemen tribes are less under control by European government:—

Here the trader is practically dealing single-handed with the native authorities, and is regarded by them in much the same light as they regard one of their great spirits—as an undoubtedly superior, different sort of creation from themselves, yet as one who is likewise interested in mundane affairs, and whom they try to manage and propitiate and bully for their own advantage; while the trader, on his part, gets to know them so well during this process that he usually gets fond of them, as all white men who really know Africans always do, and looks after them when they are sick, or in trouble, and tries to keep them at peace with each other and with the white Government, for on peace depends the prosperity that means trade. Therefore on the whole the trader knows his African better than all the other sorts of white men put together, and he demonstrates this in two ways. Firstly he calls upon the gods to be informed why he is condemned to live and deal with such a set of human beings as these blacks; and then, if the gods remove him from among them and send him home to live among white men, he spends the rest of his days contrasting the white and black human beings to the disadvantage of the former, and hankering to get back to the Coast; which demonstrates that the trader feels more than other men the fascination of West Africa—in other words, that he understands West Africa, and therefore that he is the person most fitted to speak regarding it, and the most valuable collector of facts that the student of the primitive culture in the region can get to act for him.

What, then, were these men like? One of her letters to me describes Mr. Dennett himself and her life as his guest in an out-of-the-way trading post:—

I so often feel lonely away from those men like Dennett and Parke and the rest of them; they are my people, and their minds are like a print to me, whether they are drunk or sober, sick or well, bad or good, or in their normal every-day state—mixed. I know how they think. I'll be shot if I know how people will think up here—and as for getting people up here to understand those other men, or me, well, I despair. Dennett is, I grant, a bit more curious than the rest of us; the only thing in literature that is like him is Attwood in the *Ebbtide*, by Stevenson. That is not Dennett's photograph, because Dennett is a dreamer; but did I ever tell you how when I was away with him at a very lonely hut factory, where he was quite down on his uppers, he used to say in the evening as we sat in a murky little room illuminated by a wick floating in oil, burning faintly, then flaming, then going into a sort of fit and out with a fizzle, "Now let us have a little talk with God"? It was not praying, it was conversation with the Deity, respectful but familiar, and now and then extremely critical, and I was never able to think it was queer of Dennett. I expect he has explained that Parke affair [a theological operation *in extremis*] pretty fully to the Deity, and put himself quite straight with Him, since he has tried to with me. I hope more successfully, for I have written to him, saying in my haste that they were a pack of idiots to think that good old Parke's soul wanted all that fillaloo and foolishness, and that it don't matter whether Parke has been consigned to paradise stamped R.C.—as he undoubtedly now is—or no, for I do not believe that the Merchandise Marks Act runs overskies, and Parke's soul get confiscated for "false labelling and declaration."

Even Mr. Dennett's society was a sharp change from the conditions of life and society at Cambridge. But another letter (to Sir Matthew Nathan) describes much less civilised variants of the species, with intent to exemplify "the infinite toleration, chivalry and kindness" which she had received:—

Of course I ought to be shocked at them, but I cannot be because they were kind to me. You will find in that nursing thing reference to a hulk. I shall not forget that hulk, though

it is no more. I was up at Lualu, and one day when out in a canoe alone, lost my way thoroughly at the end of an amusing day. I found myself down at Cheloango and I knew, though I had not been there before, that my firm, Hatton & Cookson, had a hulk there. It was dark, and I saw a vessel, small and anchored, made for it and climbed on board, found no one on deck except a sleeping nig. I kicked him awake and spoke to him, and with an awful yell he fled down the cabin stairs. Such an awful powwow followed in Portuguese that I fled overside with my canoe and went off. Presently I found another little anchored ship and going on board her, found she was the right one. Meanwhile the calm of evening was disturbed by rifle-shots and beating to quarters on the Portuguese guardship, to the agitation of my traders, to whom I explained, I expected it was my visit to her, not European wars or native risings, that had upset her nerves. Well, those two men if they had been Dukes could not have been more courteous to me. They were not Dukes. One could not read or write, the other had a limited vocabulary outside curse words, but they both knew their business and the place and were respected. I had to stay on board that hulk four days waiting for a trader canoe to go up to Lualu, and some two months afterwards when I was in Cheloango again I stayed with them; they were the roughest customers I have ever had to deal with among the traders, but I preferred their society because I felt safer with them to that of many Government officials I have met there, who were club sweepings and who used to call the traders "warehouse sweepings."

Good offices were not all on one side: I extract from her letters to George Macmillan this reference to a gentleman whose name figures in the *Travels* more than once as the hero of hairbreadth escapes. Having described him as "my friend MacTaggart who is habitually killed and eaten in West Africa," she goes on:—

They cut off the top of his head and grilled it last time I had to nurse him: they had been making sauce out of his blood and we had to give him enough iron to make a roof with before we got a trace of colour in his face, and then, if you please, all the colour went and settled in the top of his nose: he is a most unfortunate man and a great worry to me.

Doubtless her early reading of pirate chronicles and

the like had imbued her with the taste for such frequentations. No squeamish creature, and no one without the love of danger, could have kept the company she courted in West Africa.

In a sense she came and went among the traders as one of themselves—a trader, though not a competitor. Writing to Macmillan after her *Travels* had appeared, she expresses some disquiet because royalties would normally not be payable till January 1898.

Now I hope to be on the Coast in January '98. If there is any profit, I should like to have part of this for outfit. My small assured income I keep for home purposes. I started on the Coast with £300, and by doing a little in rubber and ivory, I make that capital do, and pay my way out there to black and white with a Royal Munificence (African brand), but I have to travel very hard myself, tentless and living on native food and so on. If I could avoid any of this I would, if I could do it on my own money.

The concluding sentence of this letter—which, it need hardly be said, was never designed for publication—is not relevant here, but is too characteristic to leave out:—

Nothing will ever persuade me to take a grant, though I have had offers of three good ones, but I am determined to have my finance under my own hand, and have 20s. for every 15s. I owe, remembering the immortal words of Mr. Micawber.

But this financial reason was secondary to one far more decisive. To travel where she wanted to travel, she must make payment in goods: and it was better that the visiting anthropologist should appear to be bringing these goods for a reason easily intelligible to those who were to be visited. As she put it in a lecture (quoted in the introduction to *West African Studies*):—

To get the real African, you must go away from the coast towns, and when you are away from the coast towns in a thoroughly wild part of West Africa, you don't irritate the natives more than you can avoid. The climate is unhealthy enough without your making things worse by spoiling people's tempers with rude questions about their religious and private affairs, particularly if you happen to be, as I was, alone among them, without an armed

expedition. Recognising these things, I decided to adopt the method of studying the native mind pursued by Habbe Schleiden, who went out to West Africa as a trader. He was not a success as a trader. That so-called "simple child of nature," the African, swindled that distinguished scientific man in his trade sadly. But he got what he wanted, a wonderful knowledge of the native mind and ideas, and I followed humbly in his footsteps, avoiding being swindled as much as possible by giving great attention to trade matters before I went in for them.<sup>1</sup>

The sum and substance of this is that she travelled, not as most other explorers have done, with an organised party, but like a trader; and, for that matter, rather like a native trader than a European, depending for shelter on what she could find in native villages and for food on what she could get to eat there. A study of her narrative will reveal the varieties of lodging: as to the food, I may quote a sentence from her eulogy of a condiment made from pulped kernels, and called odeaka cheese, which is added with red peppers to meat tied up in plantain leaves and cooked in wood embers:—

The dish is really excellent, even when made with bon constrictor, hippo or crocodile. It makes the former most palatable; but of course it does not remove the musky taste of crocodile; nothing I know of will.

This, however, refers almost to banquets. In general:—

The food supply consists of plantain, yam, koko, sweet potatoes, maize, pumpkin, pineapple, and ochres, fish both wet and smoked, and flesh of many kinds—including human in certain districts—snails, snakes, and crayfish, and big maggot-like pupæ of the rhinoceros beetle and the *Rhyncophorus palmatorum*. For sweet-meats the sugar-cane abounds, but it is only chewed *au naturel*. For seasoning, there is that bark that tastes like an onion, an onion distinctly *passé*, but powerful and permanent, particularly if it has been used in one of the native-made, rough earthen pots. These pots have a very cave-man look about them; they are unglazed, unlidded bowls. They stand the fire wonderfully well, and you have got to stand, as well as you can, the taste of

<sup>1</sup> *West African Studies*, p. xxii.

the aforesaid bark that clings to them, and that of the smoke which gets into them during cooking operations over an open wood fire, as well as the soot-like colour they impart to even your own white rice. Out of all this varied material the natives of the Congo Français forests produce, dirtily, carelessly and wastefully, a dull, indigestible diet. Yam, sweet potatoes, ochres, and maize are not so much cultivated or used as among the Negroes, and the daily food is practically plantain—picked while green and the rind pulled off, and the tasteless woolly interior baked or boiled and the widely distributed manioc treated in the usual way.

The manioc meal is the staple food, the bread equivalent, all along the coast. As you pass along you are perpetually meeting with a new named food, fou-fou on the Leeward, kank on the Windward, m'vada in Corisco, agooma in the Ogowé; but acquaintance with it demonstrates that it is all the same—manioc. If I ever meet a tribe that refers to buttered muffins I shall know what to expect and so not get excited. It is a good food when it is properly prepared; but when a village has soaked its soil-laden manioc tubers in one and the same pool of water for years, the water in that pool becomes a trifle strong, and both it and the manioc get a smell which once smelt is never to be forgotten; it is something like that resulting from bad paste with a dash of vinegar, but fit to pass all these things, and has qualities of its own that have no civilised equivalent.<sup>1</sup>

She observes that she has “gone into this bush cooking in detail, so that you may understand why on the Coast, when a man comes in and says he has been down on native chop, we say, ‘Good gracious!’ and give him the best on the spot.” In the same spirit, I have quoted at some length in order that it may be understood what is meant when she said that she had travelled on native food.

Manifestly, then, the woman who went back to West Africa at the end of December 1894 was anything but a novice. She was going out to those whom she already counted her people, and intending to rely on their good offices. But her association with traders had been formed on the Coast—not in Liverpool. “I never met any of the trade lords till I came back in 1896,” she

<sup>1</sup> *Travels*, p. 208 (abridged here).



writes to Macmillan. She had, however, now an official association. Coming up to Calabar in 1893, she had made acquaintance with Major Sir Claude MacDonald, who since 1889 had been in charge of the newly-formed Oil River Protectorate. His wife was coming to join him, and it was arranged that she and Miss Kingsley should sail together. The two were much of an age, but the "old Coaster" felt it her duty (Lady MacDonald says) to look after her companion; and the couple of letters which survive show that they found each other mighty good company.

For the opening stage of their journey out, one must turn to her later book, *West African Studies*, where it appears as introductory, having been, as she says in her preface, crowded out of the earlier volume ("so, though you may not be glad to see it here, you must be glad it was not there"). Indeed, her literary advisers would have wished to crowd it out again, for it is a free description of life on a West Coast cargo-boat "with some observations" (according to the chapter heading), "on the natural history of mariners never before published." As, for instance, we are told of every first officer's devotion to the complexion of his deck, and the ensuing effect on his permanent relations with the chief engineer—always a coal addict—and of the intermittent explosions when the cook spills on it the products of his galley. These nautical impressions are woven in with a sketch of the "old Coaster" and the kind of thing that a new Coaster was likely to hear from him: "for the instruction of the young in the charms of Coast Life is the faithfully discharged mission of the old Coasters on steamboats, especially at meal-times." Its topics were: Fever and its rapid consequences; the value of having dress trousers ("you want them to wear at funerals: do you know, my dress trousers didn't get mouldy once all last wet season"); the possible variants to fever, such as kraw-kraw, the Portuguese itch, Guinea worm, ulcer and the smallpox. This preliminary en-

lightening of the novice had, in her opinion, a high educational value, and the people who do not like West Africa when they get there "have not," she says firmly, "been brought up in a suitable academy as I was."

Now, such grim jesting did not please her academic critics, as she confided to George Macmillan :—

Mrs. (J. R.) Green is horrified at it. She always tells me, just as Guillemard did that I *ought not* to go on like that. Take myself seriously, etc. I really *am* always serious and "duller than a great Thaw" compared with the things I speak of, and I feel you cannot understand W. A. unless you understand the steamboat. Moreover, I do not want to be *anyone*, and this laughable stuff is in the thing—just as much as the Fetish is, etc.; and when Lyall and Mrs. G. and Guillemard and Strong and so on come along and expect me to stand on my head, all my innate vulgarity breaks out.

Indeed, the steamboat phase was an essential part of what she had to recount. Her errand was (in her own formula) to study "fish and fetish"; but if she had been only or chiefly a naturalist and anthropologist, her importance would have been very different. She went to West Africa impelled by what was in her blood—the need of adventure, to see, to know, to experience; but what she found there raised the spirit of a great Englishwoman, and questions crowded in on her. What brought Englishmen there? What was West Africa worth to England? Where in all this matter did the honour and interest of England lie? For the place was the valley of the shadow of death; the nearer she came to it, the blacker it looked; those who had most converse with it had most to say of its dangers: so much, indeed, that they said it jesting. When men sat and drank together on the Coast, or on the way to it, death was the staple of their entertainment.

On your first voyage out you hardly believe the stories of fever told by the old Coasters. That is because you do not then understand the type of man who is telling them—a man who goes to his death with a joke in his teeth. But a short experience of your

own, particularly if you happen on a place having one of its periodic epidemics, soon demonstrates that the underlying horror of the thing is there, a rotting corpse which the old Coaster has dusted over with jokes to cover it so that it hardly shows at a distance, but which, when you come yourself to live alongside, you soon become cognisant of.<sup>1</sup>

Yet for a matter of four centuries Englishmen had been coming and going to this region, on the ordinary business of a seafaring merchant people: risking their lives so that people at home might prosper. They had acquired rights and authorities, but, in essence, England's sole purpose in Africa was trade. Government officials and soldiers were there as an appanage to trade. Missionaries had their own unselfish purpose, which she knew how to respect: but her stand was with and for the men who carried on England's main business there, and without whom and their forerunners, England would have had in West Africa neither rights nor authority. That was the first thing she found to learn about the Coast; and if these men from whom she learnt it (whether traders or seamen) were rough and vulgar, they were men taking a deadly risk and facing it after their own fashion. And in their own fashion she described them, with broad humour that had no use for refinement.

After the Canaries, the first port of call was Sierra Leone, where the West Coast begins for Englishmen: England's oldest possession, and so far sophisticated that it was no more typical of West Africa than Tangier is (or was) of Morocco. "I succumbed to the charm of the Coast after I left Sierra Leone,"<sup>2</sup> she says; and the intended discrimination is clear; although, "it would be hard to find a more pleasant and varied way of spending an afternoon than going about its capital, Free Town, with a certain Irish purser, who is as well-known as he is respected among the leviathan old negro ladies."<sup>3</sup> Stately Mohammedans from the Arabised tribes of the Western Sudan seemed to her "un-

<sup>1</sup> *Travels*, p. 85.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

doubtedly the gentlemen of the Sierra Leone native population"; but her concern in Africa was chiefly with the pure negro, not with the tawny Moors or black Moors of mixed strain. In so far as she was in quest of fetish, the Mohammedan was of little interest to her, except when his orthodox creed was affected by native beliefs. But as an observer of African life in its wider aspects, she reached conclusions, embodied in a sentence: "Judged by the criterion of every day conduct, the Mohammedan is in nine cases out of ten the best man in West Africa."

Very different was her attitude to the Europeanised native: "that perfect flower of Sierra Leone culture who yells your bald name across the street at you, condescendingly informs you that you can go and get letters that are waiting for you, while he smokes his cigar and lolls in the shade, or in some similar way displays his second-hand rubbishy white culture. The truth is he feels too insecure of his own real position, and so he dare not be courteous like the Mandingo or the bush Fan."<sup>1</sup>

Mary Kingsley was the African's champion; but she did not think that England's business in West Africa was to make imitation Europeans or Americans, or that trial by jury was a useful instrument of justice in Free Town. What she did believe was that a trader must desire the prosperity and advancement of those he traded with; and that all English policy in West Africa should be shaped to foster prosperity and progress on lines congenial to the African nature. That nature she only found at its best where it was not spoilt by misdirected efforts or by unprofitable examples.

After Sierra Leone the traveller on her second journey stopped at the Gold Coast ports, Cape Coast and Accra; and here again her impressions are only such as a singularly well-instructed tourist might have secured. Being Lady MacDonald's companion, she was to some extent under official auspices. But at Accra, while Lady

<sup>1</sup> *Travels*, p. 20.

MacDonald spent the night at Government House, Mary Kingsley preferred to accept the hospitality of a missionary and his wife with whom she had made friends on the voyage. That chance encounter had led to a lasting friendship and to a view of Protestant mission work at its best; for the Wesleyan mission under Mr. Dennis Kemp (who had seven years' experience of the Coast) was largely staffed by natives, and was to a great extent supported by money raised by local subscriptions. It was also following the lead of the Basel missionaries in giving technical instruction, a most needed branch of education; for, as Mary Kingsley repeats often, the African differs not only from Europeans, but Asiatics in being strangely "deficient in mechanical culture"—less of a tool-maker than other breeds of men. "Alas," she adds, "none of the missions save the Roman Catholic teach the thing that it is most important that natives should learn in the face of the conditions that European government of the Coast has introduced, namely improved methods of agriculture and plantation work."

Yet since her day the Gold Coast has become the world's greatest source of cocoa supply, by free native culture organised under English direction—one of many developments that would have rejoiced her.

Her alliance with Mr. Kemp ensured that whatever she had to say in criticism of English mission work would be said in kindness, and her strictures were better received, and therefore better attended to, than if she had spoken without liking. Mr. Kemp, who had returned to England before her book appeared, was able to help in securing this. Knowing her goodwill, he set the example of treating her as a friend who should be listened to even when she seemed more candid than friendly.

The matter is important because she deliberately and explicitly sided with the traders; and trader and missionary were cat and dog all down the Coast. What is more, some of her deepest convictions ran against

those which missionaries felt bound to uphold. But it was her nature to recognise and respect honesty and manliness when she met them, and that is why, holding her views none the less strongly, expressing them none the less clearly, she was able to make friendships among missionaries and officials as well as among her own peculiar people. One could produce many letters from her to Mr. Kemp and his wife full of friendly affection; but I had rather quote from what these friends were never intended to see—letters urging her publisher to look favourably on a book of Mr. Kemp's own. They laugh at him in the way that she laughed at those who were her friends:—

I wish I could have introduced you to Mr. Kemp when he was up a ladder on the Gold Coast, busy whitewashing and holding forth, as occasion demanded, on the indolence and general worthlessness of Blacks or the uncharitableness of Whites. He is a grand creature in the world, whatever he may be in literature. I have read his MS. . . . Of course I am no judge of it, because I am dazzled by my knowledge of the man and the things he writes of so truthfully.

From this passing call at the Gold Coast, Captain Murray of the *Batanga* took them on to Calabar, which was the end of the journey for Lady MacDonald, and in a sense for Mary Kingsley also, since she settled here as a guest from January to May.

On their arrival, the High Commissioner was on the wharf to receive them, but business called him to Fernando Po, so instead of going to Government House they shipped themselves straight across to the big island. Fernando Po had been visited by Mary Kingsley on the earlier journey, but now, with more time available, she set down to a serious study of its queer natives, the Bubis. Here, for the first time in the book, the reader is aware of a trained scientific observation, although the results are set out in such a way as to be amusing. But the account is not confined to the Bubis, their beliefs, their habits, their diet and so on; it is a complete natural

history of the island with some side-lights on its European political history and on the working of such innovations as telephones and a café. Scientifically, however, it was one of the pieces of work on which she prided herself. Writing to George Macmillan before her book came out, she says: "The notes on Fernando Po ought to instruct men like E. B. Tylor" (the anthropologist for whom she had most reverence), "for the natives, the so-called Bubis, are a notoriously unknown tribe; no one but a German, Dr. Baumann, and myself have ever worked on them."

But I am concerned now to pick out her adventures, and here there was no supply of them, except that in an exploration she got cut off by the tide and had to wade waist-high across the mouth of a river, "remembering that I had been informed that there were very nasty crocodiles on that island," and that "it is the habit of these animals when they are handy to the sea to lounge down and meet the incoming tide." But she saw none, and "the worst part of the affair was getting round the projecting bits of rocky cliff where the sea was breaking; not roughly, or I should not be here now."

It was when they returned that a sharp surprise met them; though, characteristically enough, her book makes no mention of the fact that she found the Protectorate almost at once in a state of war. The natives of Brass had risen, and Sir Claude had instantly to proceed there and take charge of operations—leaving Lady MacDonald and her "honorary aide-de-camp" to make their own way to Government House and settle in as best they could, without the Commissioner's assistance. He was away for some weeks, and in that time the head of his office reported that an assistant was seriously ill and that all doctors were away with the expedition. How was he to be nursed? "Send him up here," said Lady MacDonald. He came, and was put to bed in the Commissioner's room, apparently with

a high fever. But Mary Kingsley had thought at one moment of taking up medicine; her miscellaneous reading covered medical books, which were plenty in her home; and she had acquired considerable knowledge of nursing. It may have been due to these studies, or to lights acquired in her earlier voyage, that the case presented no difficulties to her. "Do you know what's the matter with that young man?" she said in her deep voice. "D.T.'s the matter, my girl. D.T., I tell you." So they nursed him through it.

About her stay at Calabar she has written little, except what appears in her study of fetish. This silence about the Oil Rivers, where she spent five months studying native customs and collecting fish and insects, is notable and she gives her reasons:—

I do not feel that I yet know enough to have the right to speak regarding them, unless I were going to do so along accepted, well-trodden lines, and what I have seen and personally know of the region does not make me feel at all inclined to do this. So I will wait until I have had further opportunities of observing them.<sup>1</sup>

Then comes an illuminating note on her method of observing:—

The state of confusion the mind of a collector like myself gets into on the West Coast is something simply awful, and my notes for a day will contain facts relating to the kraw-kraw, price of onions, size and number of fish caught, cooking recipes, genealogies, oaths (native form of), law cases, and market prices, etc., etc. And the undertaking of tidying these things up is no small one. As for one's personal memory, it becomes a rag-bag into which you dip frantically when someone asks you a question, and you almost always fail to secure your particular fact-rag for some minutes.

Most of her time was spent, she says, "puddling about the river and the forest round Duke Town and Creek Town." If there is one fact that stands out from her narrative, it is her inability to keep away from water or out of water, even when water meant mud;

<sup>1</sup> *Travels*, p. 73.



and the effect on her wardrobe can easily be imagined. But there were other aspects to this "puddling" when it was done in a "suitable small canoe" among "miles of rotting mud and water fringed with walls of rotting mud and mango swamp":—

This is a fascinating pursuit. For people who like that sort of thing it is just the sort of thing they like, as the art critic of a provincial town wisely observed anent an impressionist picture recently acquired for the municipal gallery. But it is a pleasure to be indulged in with caution; for one thing, you are certain to come across crocodiles. Now a crocodile drifting down in deep water, or lying asleep with its jaws open on a sandbank in the sun, is a picturesque adornment to the landscape when you are on the deck of a steamer, and you can write home about it and frighten your relations on your behalf; but when you are away among the swamps in a small dug-out canoe, and that crocodile and his relations are awake—a thing he makes a point of being at flood-tide because of fish coming along—and when he has got his foot upon his native heath—that is to say, his tail within holding reach of his native mud—he is highly interesting, and you may not be able to write home about him—and you get frightened on your own behalf. For crocodiles can, and often do, in such places, grab at people in small canoes. I have known of several natives losing their lives in this way; some native villages are approachable from the main river by a short cut, as it were, through the mangrove swamps, and the inhabitants of such villages will now and then go across this way with small canoes instead of by the constant channel in to the village, which is almost always winding. In addition to this unpleasantness you are liable—until you realise the danger from experience, or have native advice on the point—to get tide-trapped away in the swamps, the water falling round you when you are away in some deep pool or lagoon, and you find you cannot get back to the main river. For you cannot get out and drag your canoe across the stretches of mud that separates you from it, because the mud is of too unstable a nature and too deep, and sinking into it means staying in it, at any rate till some geologist of the remote future may come across you in a fossilised state, when that mangrove swamp shall have become dry land. Of course if you really want a truly safe investment in Fame, and really care about Posterity, and Posterity's Science, you will jump over into the black, batter-like, stinking slime, cheered by the thought of the terrific sensation you will

produce 20,000 years hence, and the care you will be taken of then by your fellow-creatures in a museum. But if you are a mere ordinary person of a retiring nature, like me, you stop in your lagoon until the tide rises again; most of your attention is directed to dealing with an "at home" to crocodiles and mangrove flies, and with the fearful stench of the slime round you. What little time you have over you will employ in wondering why you came to West Africa, and why, after having reached this point of absurdity, you need have gone and painted the lily and adorned the rose, by being such a colossal ass as to come fooling about in mangrove swamps. Twice this chatty little incident, as Lady MacDonald would call it, has happened to me, but never again if I can help it. On one occasion, the last, a mighty Silurian, as *The Daily Telegraph* would call him, chose to get his front paws over the stern of my canoe, and endeavoured to improve our acquaintance. I had to retire to the bows, to keep the balance right (it is no use saying because I was frightened, for this miserably understates the case), and fetch him a clip on the snout with a paddle, when he withdrew, and I paddled into the very middle of the lagoon, hoping the water was too deep there for him or any of his friends to repeat the performance. Presumably it was, for no one did it again. I should think that crocodile was eight feet long; but don't go and say I measured him, or that this is my outside measurement for crocodiles. I have measured them when they have been killed by other people, fifteen, eighteen and twenty-one feet odd. This was only a pushing young creature and he had not learnt manners.<sup>1</sup>

That is one of the more startling stories that she relates, after her fashion, without piling on the drama. Still, it was one that she considered it possible to set out without risking such incredulity as met du Chaillu when he reported what everybody knows now to be true about the gorilla country. But she always exercised a careful selection. Once when we were talking of crocodiles and their danger, she mentioned the fact that in certain rivers they did not attack humans, and illustrated it by an experience. The steamer that plied on a river with a very strong current had a plan for economising time and fuel when it had to land passengers at a certain factory, opposite which was a strong eddy. A log was

<sup>1</sup> *Travels*, p. 88.

trailed alongside, the passengers sat on it, and at the proper moment it was cut loose and the eddy took the log to the wharf. There were crocodiles in the river, but they were not considered dangerous. "Still," she said, "I never felt comfortable about the legs till we were landed ashore." When I asked why she had not printed this testimonial to the character of these particular crocodiles, she answered that she had to consider her reputation as a trustworthy traveller. Nevertheless, I am as sure that the facts were what she stated as if I had seen her come ashore dripping, with a broadly humorous expression of relief.

But over and above this exploration for "fish and fetish" in the Oil River swamps, she made, at this time, a friendship after her own heart. In my endeavour to get some estimate of Mary Kingsley's surviving effect, I asked a Roman Catholic bishop who had been several years in Nigeria whether he had become aware of any influence resulting from her work. His answer was that though of course he knew Miss Kingsley's name, only one woman, in his opinion, had left a lasting mark in West Africa—a Presbyterian missionary, Miss Mary Slessor. I cannot imagine anything that would have given Mary Kingsley more delight than this appraisal of her friend with whom she stayed some days at Okyon up the river. I quote the whole of her own estimate, since it shows at the best what a European Christian can do for the native African, and by what attainments and what qualities.

This very wonderful lady has been eighteen years in Calabar; for the last six or seven living entirely alone, as far as white folks go, in a clearing in the forest near to one of the principal villages of the Okyon district, and ruling as a veritable white chief over the entire Okyon district. Her great abilities, both physical and intellectual, have given her among the savage tribe an unique position, and won her, from white and black who know her, a profound esteem. Her knowledge of the native, his language, his ways of thought, his diseases, his difficulties, and all that is his, is extraordinary, and the amount of good she has done, no man can

fully estimate. Okyon, when she went there alone—living in the native houses while she built, with the assistance of the natives, her present house—was a district regarded with fear by the Duke and Creek Town natives, and practically unknown to Europeans. It was given, as most of the surrounding districts still are, to killing at funerals, ordeal by poison, and perpetual internecine wars. Many of these evil customs she has stamped out, and Okyon rarely gives trouble to its nominal rulers, the Consuls in Old Calabar, and trade passes freely through it down to the sea-ports.

This instance of what one white can do would give many important lessons in West Coast administration and development. Only, the sort of man Miss Slessor represents is rare. There are but few who have the same power of resistance in the malarial climate, and of acquiring the language, and an insight into the negro mind, so perhaps after all it is no great wonder that Miss Slessor stands alone, as she certainly does.<sup>1</sup>

It was a strange alliance, for Mary Kingsley was not an adherent of any church, and if she ever accepted any definition of her views it was when she called herself a staunch Darwinian; whereas Miss Slessor, originally a mill-hand near Dundee, was in the strictest sense a Bible Christian of the Presbyterian persuasion. But they must have found much in common; for Lady MacDonald remembers that when Mary Kingsley came back from her visit, she told how the pair of them had sat up talking in the little house which had not even a timepiece, and did not know the night had passed till dawn came on them. We can only guess what they would talk of. But we know what Mary Kingsley admired in her—"that tact which, coupled with her courage, had given Miss Slessor an influence and a power among the negroes unmatched by that of any other white." In her chapter on Fetish we find the exemplification not only of this lady's courage, but her wisdom.

Twins are everywhere among African negroes and Bantus regarded with horror. In the Niger Delta, the infants are left to die and the mother is driven out. This custom Miss Slessor had of course set herself to fight,

<sup>1</sup> *Travels*, p. 74.

and when Mary Kingsley first arrived at Okyon, her hostess had heard of the arrival of twins and set out hot-foot by a bush-path, on which she met the woman carrying the infants in a gin case on her head, with the village howling behind her—until the white woman relieved her of her burden.

She did not take the twins and their mother down the village path to her own house, for though had she done so the people of Okyon would not have prevented her, yet so polluted would the path have been, and so dangerous to pass down, that they would have been compelled to cut another, no light task in that bit of forest, I assure you. So Miss Slessor stood waiting in the broiling sun, in the hot season's height, while a path was being cut to enable her just to get through to her own grounds. The natives worked away hard, knowing that it saved the polluting of a long stretch of market road, and when it was finished Miss Slessor went to her own house by it and attended with all kindness, promptness, and skill, the woman and children.<sup>1</sup>

In two Lives of Miss Slessor that I have read there is much talk of her courage and devotion, but no mention of her wisdom in conforming to native views when they did not absolutely conflict with Christian duty. She knew that the terror was none the less real, because it was superstitious, and she allowed for that. But she took the twins into her home, knowing that many of those whom she might desire to see there would be kept away; but trusting that their need of her would bring them there, as it did.

When Mary Kingsley was on her way home in 1895, a German warship gave her a passage to Calabar from Cameroon; and here she decided to wait for the *Batanga's* sister ship, "going to say good-bye to Mary Slessor at Okyon during the few days at my disposal."<sup>2</sup>

The missionary was therefore one of the last people whom the explorer saw in West Africa.—Her earlier hosts, the MacDonalds, had then gone to China, where it was to be Sir Claude MacDonald's lot to organise the

<sup>1</sup> *Travels*, p. 474.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

defence of Pekin in the Boxer rising. Greater fame waited him in Japan, and by his work there he is best remembered. But at her first appearance in print Mary Kingsley paid a tribute to his work in West Africa. Writing to the *Spectator* of December 21st, 1895, she says :—

The experiment of governing a bit of Africa with perfect calmness and steady justice to the natives, only tempered now and then with sympathetic mercy and with never a trace of the old severity, is being tried by Sir Claude MacDonald in the Niger Coast Protectorate.

Everything that could be done under the existing British system was, in short, being done there. Another sentence admitted that she was not hopeful of the results. She had no faith in the system by which England was then governing Africans along the Coast, even when the men who administered it won from her the fullest admiration and confidence that she had to give.

## CHAPTER V

### WITH CANNIBALS IN GORILLA LAND

REAL adventures, far excelling minor incidents with crocodiles and canoes, began after this adventurer left the official shelter of Government House and struck out on her own for her "beloved South-west Coast." In order to get there she must first go north to Lagos and change boats in the roads, bearing in mind "the special case of a gentleman who came down to the Coast for pleasure and lost a leg to a shark" while so engaged. But nothing untoward happened; on the contrary, at Lagos, her own world, the strictly unofficial, took her, so to say, to its bosom from the moment of transhipping.

As I, after a good deal of trouble in the *Fanette's* boat to get my companions to go on deck before me up the rope ladder, elaborately climbed that thrilling nautical institution myself and had got my head over the top of the bulwark, I saw a yard off me, dead ahead, still superintending the hatch—my first tutor in Kru English. It was in '93 that he had last seen me, a very new comer, going ashore at San Paul de Loanda from the *Lagos*, on which vessel he was then officer, and vowing I meant to go home by the next boat; now, seeing me coming on board, in a way I am sure would have done credit to a Half Jack captain, he naturally asked for an explanation, which, being quite busy with the rope-ladder palaver, I did not then and there give him.<sup>1</sup>

The explanation, however, is given in her book and is worth attention. Her original hope had been to explore about the Benué and Niger, where Sir George Goldie had placed at her disposal "great facilities for carrying on work in comfort." But "for certain private reasons" she was disinclined to go from the Royal Niger Protec-

<sup>1</sup> *Travels*, p. 83.

torate to the Royal Niger Company's territory. This needs some exposition. In the first place, it means that before her second journey she had made friends with the ablest man then handling West African affairs. She was also aware that the relations between the chartered Company and the Protectorate, a territory administered under the Foreign Office, were exceedingly strained; and there is no doubt that she was afraid of becoming somehow involved in the dispute between these two administrations, the head of each being a friend whom she valued and admired. Such considerations were decisive against her own comfort; and she went out into what she herself calls "the wildest and most dangerous part of the West African regions" with complete disregard of comfort and security.

I should not like to swear, however, that the danger and the difficulty were not a temptation when she decided to make her centre of exploration the Ogowé, "the greatest river between the Niger and the Congo," whose densely forested banks are peopled by "a set of notoriously savage tribes, chief among which are the Fans."

There is in West Africa, it seems, a continual drift of peoples from the country beyond the forest belt down towards the lure of the coast. As they approach nearer to the swampy fringe, their energy slackens; nor is life in the forest so laborious as in the open regions where cultivation is needed. The Fans were fresh incomers, migrants who had begun to appear only within what she found to be living memory; and their energy had not abated. No people on the West Coast were readier to kill men or to eat them.

But the country in which they lived and into which she was going was in the heart of the Great Forest Belt. What that means, and her initiation into its meaning, she must describe.

On first entering the great grim twilight regions of the forest you hardly see anything but the vast column-like grey tree-stems



in their countless thousands around you, and the sparsely vegetated ground beneath. But day by day, as you get trained to your surroundings, you see more and more, and a whole world grows up gradually out of the gloom before your eyes. Snakes, beetles, bats and beasts, people the region that at first seemed lifeless.

It is the same with the better-lit regions, where vegetation is many-formed and luxuriant. As you get used to it, what seemed at first to be an inextricable tangle ceases to be so. The separate sorts of plants stand out before your eyes with ever-increasing clearness, until you can pick out the one particular one you may want; and daily you find it easier to make your way through what looked at first an impenetrable wall, for you have learnt that it is in the end easier to worm your way in among the networks of creepers, than to shirk these, and go for the softer walls of climbing grasses and curtains of lycopodium, and not only is it easier, but safer, for in the grass and lycopodium there are nearly certain to be snakes galore, and the chances are you may force yourself into the privacy of a gigantic python's sleeping place.

There is the same difference also between night and day in the forest. You may have got fairly used to it by day, and then some catastrophe keeps you out in it all night, and again you see another world. To my taste there is nothing so fascinating as spending a night out in an African forest, or plantation: but I beg you to note I do not advise anyone to follow the practice. Nor indeed do I recommend African forest to any one. Unless you are interested in it and fall under its charm, it is the most awful life in death imaginable. It is like being shut up in a library whose books you cannot read, all the while tormented, terrified, and bored. And if you do fall under its spell, it takes all the colour out of other kinds of living. Still, it is good for a man to have an experience of it, whether he likes it or not, for it teaches you how very dependent you have been, during your previous life, on the familiarity of those conditions you have been brought up among, and on your fellow citizens; moreover, it takes the conceit out of you pretty thoroughly during the days you spend stupidly stumbling about among your new surroundings.

When this first period passes there comes a sense of growing power. The proudest day in my life was the day on which an old Fan hunter said to me—"Ah! you see." Now he did not say this, I may remark, as a tribute to the hard work I had been doing in order to see, but regarded it as the consequence of a chief having given me a little ivory half-moon, whose special mission was "to make man see Bush," and when you have attained to that power in full, a state I do not pretend to have yet attained to,

you can say, "Put me where you like in an African forest, and so far as the forest goes, starve me or kill me if you can."

As it is with the forest, so it is with the minds of the natives. Unless you live alone among the natives, you never get to know them; if you do this you gradually get a light into the true state of their mind-forest. At first you see nothing but a confused stupidity and crime; but when you get to see—well! as in the other forest—you see things worth seeing. But it is beyond me to describe the process, so we will pass on to Congo Français.<sup>1</sup>

She was landed at Gaboon on May 20, 1895, visited the Custom House, and being asked to pay a 15 fr. licence for carrying a revolver, decided to leave it. But they passed her collecting-cases and spirit free because they were for science. "Vive la France!" she adds. And then she was introduced to Dr. Nassau, a French Protestant missionary, "the great pioneer explorer of these regions and one of the greatest authorities on native subjects in all their bearings." He had been in West Africa since 1851.

Then follows a deal of description, mostly comic and concerning matters not important—the kind of thing which her austerer critics wanted her to leave out. I think she was right to keep it; partly because it lessened the gloom that hangs over all that can be written about the "Heart of Darkness"; it makes the whole story more normal, credible and human. But chiefly, the book was herself and these things were in her nature. "I am convinced that I have somehow strayed out of the eighteenth century into modern life," she wrote to George Macmillan, after "a lot of out-of-the-way reading" undertaken later on for her *Story of West Africa*. "My style and that of the early navigators is one and the same. I had awful times with old Roberts and Jobson" (distinguished buccaneers); "they know an awful lot, but they will go and not take themselves seriously and yarn for an hour at a time on a dead whale they found or an 'exceeding merry Droll' they played on their companions."

<sup>1</sup> *Travels*, p. 101.

After a fortnight spent at Libreville, the capital of Congo Français, she set off by steamer; a day's journey took them to the Ogowé. Mr. Hudson, Agent-General for the great Liverpool firm of Hatton and Cookson, was on board, and when they reached Lembarene, 130 miles up river, she was given quarters in the house of M. and Mme. Jacot, workers for the *Mission Evangélique*, of which Dr. Nassau was the head. They spoke English; otherwise her intercourse with French officials and planters was hampered, with ensuing comic complications that she relates joyously. Then she decided to go up-river by a small steamer from Lembarene to Talagouga; and here again she was the guest of a Protestant mission. At Lembarene she had paid general homage to missionaries' wives—"one heroic form of human being whose praise has never been adequately sung." At Talagouga the tribute was to France:—

I spent my second day talking to Mme. Forget, whose English is perfectly good, although she tells me she resisted education most strenuously in this direction from patriotic motives. I must say I bow down and worship the spirit of patriotic fire in the French, not that I would imply for one moment that I, as an Englishwoman, suffered from it in Congo Français. They always gave me the greatest help in getting about their territory and every kindness—of course there was no reason why they should not do so, but they have no reason to be anything but proud of the great things they have done here and the admirable way this noble province of theirs is administered.<sup>1</sup>

She caps that eulogy by a comparison:—

Congo Français is a very different thing to Congo Belge, a part of the world I shall not wander into again until it becomes Congo Français, and that won't be long.

The prophecy was wrong in detail, but right in substance: twelve years after she wrote this, the Congo Free State ended an existence which civilisation could not tolerate.

Society on the Ogowé was not wholly French; it was

<sup>1</sup> *Travels*, p. 157.

what she calls "varied and charming." A letter of hers written in 1899 enables us to enhance the picture of its charming variety as suggested in her book—though that even does not lack Rabclaisian incident. She is justifying to Major Nathan, then Governor of Sierra Leone, her taste for "the kind of Englishman that gives me odd jobs to do in West Africa":—

I grant you they are a little what one might call wild at times—and cause me grave anxiety. I well remember a typical instance on the Ogowé while I was staying for the night at a factory where there were two English traders. They gave me the best room and sent my meals in to me. So I did not see much of them during the afternoon. In the evening M. S—, the lonely French official on this island, sent to say he was sad, his aunt was dead in France. The news of his bereavement came up with me. Well, off goes—we will call him—our Mr. Briggs to console Mossu, and profound quiet reigned in the factory till about 12.30 a.m., when there was an awful row. Of course I stayed frightened in my room. Presently there was a crash and then silence for some little time; then, just as I made up my mind murder had been committed, there was an apologetic knocking at my door. It was our Mr. Smith. He was incoherent but quite sober; he said there was not a better fellow breathing than Briggs—he said he knew I should like Briggs if I knew him *well*, he said Briggs was a married man with two children. I said I did not doubt these things, but the point was where is our Mr. Briggs? "That is just what I came to mention, mam," he said. "Briggs is upside down in the water-butt." "Good God, man," said I, "he's drowned. Come along quick." "No," said he, "he's not drowned. The butt is dry, but I cannot get him out alone. I have been trying to this half-hour." I spare you the details of how we, failing to pull Briggs up on to the veranda by the legs, on my suggestion went down below and pushing down the bricks on which it stood, upset the water-butt and tilted B. out successfully, but swarming with insects, and how we carried him upstairs, and his devoted friend tidied him up while I made tea, and also how B., whenever he sees me to this day discourses on "the queer way fever sometimes takes a man." Those S.W. coast beaches are very different from the luxurious ones in West Africa, and the men who rule them are rougher men, but there is not one of them, from Cameroon to Kaongo, that I would not gladly pull out by the legs from any water-butt and be proud to do it.

These were the side-shows, the incidental experiences. But she had come out to work, and work was exploration.

At Talagouga she was finding new strange forms of fish in the swift river, and her heart was set now on getting into the rapids higher up. But the difficulty was to find a canoe and a crew; for the rapids were a serious danger, and that was not all. One planter lent a canoe, with two English-speaking natives, Igalwas, one of the riverine tribes. Six Fans were to make up the party. But presently it appeared that the "Fans round Talagouga wouldn't go at any price above Njolé, because they were certain they would be killed and eaten by the up-river Fans."—Finally two more Igalwas were secured and the crew of four set out, with their passenger propped against her trade-box and surmounted by the tricolour.

Her description of the ascent of the rapids occupies a score of pages, and I do not know anywhere else so good a picture of wild water. The homeward journey very naturally was more quickly accomplished, and I can quote the recital of it :—

Going down big rapids is always, everywhere, more dangerous than coming up, because when you are coming up, and a whirlpool or eddy does jam you on rocks, the current helps you off—certainly only with a view to dashing your brains out and smashing your canoe on another set of rocks it's got ready below; but for the time being it helps, and when off, you take charge and convert its plan into an incomplete fragment; whereas in going down, the current is against your backing off. M'bo had a series of prophetic visions as to what would happen to us on our way down, founded on reminiscence and tradition. I tried to comfort him by pointing out that, were any one of his prophecies fulfilled, it would spare our friends and relations all funeral expenses; and, unless they went and wasted their money on a memorial window, that ought to be a comfort to our well-regulated minds. M'bo did not see this, but was too good a Christian to be troubled by the disagreeable conviction that was in the minds of other members of my crew, namely, that our souls, unliberated by funeral rites from this world, would have to hover for ever over the Ogowé near the scene of our catastrophe. I own this idea was an unpleasant one—fancy having to pass the day in those caves with the bats, and

then come out and wander all night in the cold mists! However, like a good many likely-looking prophecies, those of M'bo did not quite come off, and a miss is as good as a mile. Twice we had a near call, by being shot in between two pinnacle rocks, within half an inch of being fatally close to each other for us; but after some alarming scrunching sounds, and creaks from the canoe, we were shot ignominiously out down-river. Several times we got on to partially submerged table-rocks, and were unceremoniously bundled off them by the Ogowé, irritated by the hindrance we were occasioning; but we never met the rocks of M'bo's prophetic soul—that lurking, submerged needle or knife-edge of a pinnacle rock which was to rip our canoe from stem to stern, neat and clean into two pieces.

A comic incident happened to us one evening. The canoe jammed along a clump of rocks, and out we went anyhow into the water. Fortunately, there were lots of rocks about; unfortunately we each chose different ones to perch on; mine was exceedingly inconvenient, being a smooth pillar affair, to which it was all I and the French flag, which always accompanied me in upsets, could do to hold on. There was considerable delay in making up our party again, for the murkiness of the night only allowed each of us to see the foam which flew round our own particular rock, and the noise of the rapids made it difficult for us to interchange information regarding our own individual position and plan of action. However, owing to that weak-minded canoe swinging round broadside on to the rocks, she did not bolt down the river. When Pierre got to her she was trying to climb sideways over them, "like a crab," he said. We seven of us got into her—number eight we could not find and were just beginning to think the Ogowé had claimed another victim when we heard the strains of that fine hymn "*Notre port est au Ciel*,"—which is a great favourite hereabouts owing to its noble tune—coming to us above the rapid's clamour in an agonised howl. We went joyfully and picked the singer off his rock, and then dashed downwards to further dilemmas and disasters. The course we had to take coming down was different to that we took coming up. Coming up we kept as closely as might be to the most advisable bank, and dodged behind every rock we could, to profit by the shelter it afforded us from the current. Coming down, fallen tree-fringed banks and rocks were converted from friends to foes; so we kept with all our power in the very centre of the current in order to avoid them. The grandest part of the whole time was coming down, below the Alemba, where the whole great Ogowé takes a tiger-like spring for about half a mile, I should think,

before it strikes a rock-reef below. As you come out from among the rocks in the upper rapid it gives you—or I should perhaps confine myself to saying, it gave me—a peculiar internal sensation to see that stretch of black water, shining like a burnished sheet of metal, sloping down before one, at such an angle. All you have got to do is keep your canoe-head straight—quite straight, you understand—for any failure so to do will land you the other side of the tomb, instead of in a cheerful no-end-of-a-row with the lower rapid's rocks. This lower rapid is one of the worst in the dry season; maybe it is so in the wet too, for the river's channel here turns an elbow-sharp curve which infuriates the Ogowé in a most dangerous manner.

I hope to see the Ogowé next time in the wet season—there must be several more of these great sheets of water than over what are rocky rapids now. Just think what coming down over that ridge above the Boko will be like! I do not fancy, however, it would ever be possible to get up the river when it is at its height, with so small a crew as we were when we went and played our knock-about farce, before King Death, in his amphitheatre in the Sierra del Cristal.”<sup>1</sup>

A steamer took the traveller back to Lembarene, and it was there that she completed those studies in the art of canoeing in swift water which she had begun at Talagouga. She did many other things. Exploring about in the bush, she twice found herself stalked and nearly shot by a native hunter. But above all she had occasion to observe mission work at its best. She sets the *Mission Evangélique* almost in a class apart; yet it is here we find the frankest criticism of missionary work, and the frankest admission of her attitude. “I am unsympathetic, for reasons of my own, with Christian Missions.”

One of them was undoubtedly the trouble about polygamy; and she goes into the whole question, as usual from a practical point of view, pointing out in particular that the African woman says, “The more wives the less work.” “I have known men who would rather have had one wife and spent the rest of the money on themselves in a civilised way, driven into polygamy by the women,” is her comment. She dwells also on the

<sup>1</sup> *Travels*, p. 188.

case of an old chief who had three wives and who as a result of conversion "profoundly and vividly believed that exclusion from Holy Communion meant eternal damnation;" yet he did not like to turn off the three wives he had lived with for years, and when he proposed to part with two and be married in church to the other, "the ladies held together; not one of them would marry him and let the other two go; so the poor old man worried himself to a shammock."<sup>1</sup>

In short, to bar polygamy in Africa meant in many cases a disturbance of natural justice; in all, it would upset the whole organisation of household life. But, there was a graver objection. European standards of conduct conflicted with a principle as strong as that which forbids incest; and about this she is very reticent. Indeed, it is characteristic of her that she will only allude covertly to the custom, "common as far as I know to all African tribes, which is well known to ethnologists, and which once caused a missionary to say, 'A blow must be struck at polygamy and that blow must be struck with a feeding-bottle.'" That is how she conveys the fact that no African woman will have intercourse with her husband while she is nursing; and they nurse their babies three years.

In many ways this bold explorer was the most old-fashioned woman among her contemporaries. She abhorred the idea of a bicycle; indeed, even for men she thought them nasty dangerous things, and her letters are full of admonition to George Macmillan on the subject. She told me further that she never took a hansom. "If I may speak the entire truth," she added, "I am never quite happy on top of a bus." I am not sure in which sense she thought it risky. But this was the standard of behaviour observed at home by the lady whose manner of leaving Lembarene has now to be recounted.

Significantly enough, she says nothing about the

<sup>1</sup> *Travels*, p. 212.



preparation for this journey from one watershed to another. There are considerable details about the efforts made to dissuade her from going up the Ogowé rapids; when she urged that a European woman had made the passage before, it was answered that Madame Quinée had a husband with her and many men, whereas she had only eight, and they not the proper crew. She defended the character of the Igalwas for canoe work; "and as for the husband, neither the Royal Geographical Society's list, nor any other, of articles necessary to travellers in tropical climates, makes mention of husbands." These arguments prevailed; but we know nothing of what was said for and against when she proposed to cross from the Ogowé to the Rembwé River, a short cut to Gaboon through Fan country and practically unexplored bush. We know that her escort and carriers consisted of four Ajumbas, river-side men, three of whom spoke trade English, and two were Christians. To them and the one Pagan was added a volunteer who wished to get across to the Rembwé, and had been unable to do so because the usual road was stopped "by those fearful Fans." Obviously another route was to be taken, and we learn incidentally that they were going "far from a French station and without the French flag." This means that she was told officially that she must go at her own peril: France took no responsibility for her on this passage. All her men carried guns, flint-locks, loaded to the muzzle, and a considerable danger to their neighbours.

On the second day of the journey down by canoe they passed a Fan town. "All Fan now," she was told, in anything but a gratified tone of voice. Also when she inquired of her crew if there were many gorillas, elephants or bush-cows in these parts, "Plenty too much," she heard.

Their first destination was not reassuring; it was a village on an island in Lake Ncovi—a lake not then shown on any map—where one of the crew thought he could

"depend on the friendship of two Fans he once met and did business with."

They found their lake, "lovely, strangely melancholy, lonely-looking,"—where they were to leave water travel and strike from one watershed to another.

Sign of human habitation at first there was none; and in spite of its beauty, there was something which I was almost going to say was repulsive. The men evidently felt the same as I did. Had any one told me that the air that lay on the lake was poison, or that in among its forests lay some path to regions of utter death, I should have said—"It looks like that"; but no one said anything, and we only looked round uneasily, until the comfortable-souled Singlet made the unfortunate observation that he "smelt blood." We all called him an utter fool, to relieve our minds, and made our way towards the second island. When we got near enough to it to see details, a large village showed among the trees on its summit, and a steep dwarf cliff, overgrown with trees and creeping plants, came down to a small beach covered with large water-washed grey stones. There was evidently some kind of row going on in that village, that took a lot of shouting too. We made straight for the beach, and drove our canoe among its outlying rocks, and then each of my men stowed his paddle away quickly, slung on his ammunition-bag, and picked up his ready-loaded gun, sliding the skin sheath off the lock. Pagan got out on to the stones alongside the canoe just as the inhabitants became aware of our arrival, and, abandoning what I hope was a mass meeting to remonstrate with the local authorities on the insanitary state of the town, came—a brown mass of naked humanity—down the steep cliff path to attend to us, whom they evidently regarded as an imperial interest. Things did not look restful, nor these Fans personally pleasant. Every man among them—no women showed—was armed with a gun, and they loosened their shovel-shaped knives in their sheaths as they came, evidently regarding a fight quite as imminent as we did. They drew up about twenty paces from us in silence. Pagan and Gray Shirt, who had joined him, held out their unembarrassed hands, and shouted out the name of the Fan man they had said they were friendly with: "Kiva-Kiva." The Fans stood still and talked angrily among themselves for some minutes, and then, Silence said to me, "It would be bad palaver if Kiva no live for this place," in a tone that conveyed to me the idea he thought this unpleasant contingency almost a certainty. The Passenger

exhibited unmistakable symptoms of wishing he had come by another boat. I got up from my seat in the bottom of the canoe and leisurely strolled ashore, saying to the line of angry faces "M'boloani" in an unconcerned way, although I well knew it was etiquette for them to salute first. They grunted, but did not commit themselves further. A minute after they parted to allow a fine-looking, middle-aged man, naked save for a dirty twist of cloth round his loins and a bunch of leopard and wild-cat tails hung from his shoulder by a strip of leopard skin, to come forward. Pagan went for him with a rush, as if he were going to clasp him to his ample bosom, but holding his hands just off from touching the Fan's shoulder in the usual way, while he said in Fan, "Don't you know me, my beloved Kiva? Surely you have not forgotten your old friend?" Kiva grunted feelingly, and raised up his hands and held them just off touching Pagan, and we breathed again. Then Gray Shirt made a rush at the crowd and went through great demonstrations of affection with another gentleman whom he recognised as being a Fan friend of his own, and whom he had not expected to meet here. I looked round to see if there was not any Fan from the Upper Ogowé whom I knew to go for, but could not see one that I could on the strength of a previous acquaintance, and on their individual merits I did not feel inclined to do even this fashionable imitation embrace. Indeed, I must say that never—even in a picture-book—have I seen such a set of wild wicked-looking savages as those we faced this night, and with whom it was touch-and-go for twenty of the longest minutes I have ever lived, whether we fought—for our lives, I was going to say, but it would not have been even for that, but merely for the price of them.<sup>1</sup>

So much settled, the next step was to hire carriers. There is of course picturesque description of the price palaver. Three leading hunters—Wiki, Kiva and another—were taken. She adds:—

I fancy it safer not to have an overpowering percentage of Fans in the party, as I know we shall have considerable stretches of uninhabited forest to traverse; and the Ajumba say that the Fans will kill people, *i.e.*, the black traders who venture into their country, and cut them up into neat pieces, eat what they want at the time, and smoke the rest of the bodies for future use. Now I do not want to arrive at the Rembwé in a smoked condition, even should my fragments be neat, and I am going in a different direction to

<sup>1</sup> *Travels*, p. 247.

what I said I was when leaving Kangwé, and there are so many ways of accounting for death out here—leopard, canoe capsize, elephants, etc.—that even were I traced—well, nothing could be done then, anyhow—so I will only take three Fans. One must diminish dead certainties to the level of sporting chances here, or one can never get on.<sup>1</sup>

The carriers were to be paid off at Hatton and Cookson's sub-factory on the Rembwé. They only knew the way as far as one Fan town where no white man or black trader had yet been; but this town traded to the Rembwé; and the carriers were willing to make the whole journey provided she guaranteed them safety. This she (unscrupulously) agreed to do. There followed four days' marching, each night being spent in a Fan village, and each village approached with complete uncertainty as to the reception. The Fans disliked the other natives, except the two who were their friends, and "would have killed and eaten those very amiable gentlemen with as much compunction as an English sportsman would kill so many rabbits." It was, however, the Fans who proved to be in most danger, because in addition to raising woman palaver in the villages (for which the party leader had to pay damages) they ran across individuals who accused them of earlier misdemeanours, such as murder. The most serious, however, was the charge of various unpaid debts, and the creditors proposed to foreclose on the estate, being Kiva's person, seize it and eat it. Part of the ceremony, as Mary Kingsley learnt when she was roused from sleep, consisted in the creditors covering themselves with white clay to celebrate the removal of a misdoer; and as she observed that "a lady was working up white clay in a pot," she had to pay up out of her trade stuff; for as always, she travelled as a trader.

Another hint of possibilities came to her in the town of Efoua, where, as usual, a native hut was put at her disposal.

<sup>1</sup> *Travels*, p. 252.

Waking up again, I noticed the smell in the hut was violent, from being shut up, I suppose, and it had an unmistakably organic origin. Knocking the ash end off the smouldering bush-light that lay burning on the floor, I investigated, and tracked it to those bags, so I took down the biggest one, and carefully noted exactly how the tie-tie had been put round its mouth; for these things are important and often mean a lot. I then shook its contents out in my hat [the fur cap] for fear of losing anything of value. They were a human hand, three big toes, four eyes, two ears, and other portions of the human frame. The hand was fresh, the others only so so, and shrivelled. Replacing them I tied the bag up, and hung it up again. I subsequently heard that although the Fans will eat their fellow friendly tribes-folk, yet they like to keep a little something belonging to them as a memento. This touching trait in their character I learnt from Wiki; and, though it's to their credit, under the circumstances, still it's an unpleasant practice when they hang the remains in the bedroom you occupy, particularly if the bereavement in your host's family has been recent.<sup>1</sup>

There were of course other risks in plenty, and one came when in following a path she fell some fifteen feet into a game pit:—

It is at these times you realise the blessing of a good thick skirt. Had I paid heed to the advice of many people in England, who ought to have known better, and did not do it themselves, and had adopted masculine garments, I should have been spiked to the bone and done for. Whereas, save for a good many bruises, here I was with the fulness of my skirt tucked under me, sitting on nine ebony spikes some twelve inches long, in comparative comfort, howling lustily to be hauled out.<sup>2</sup>

One of her Ajumbas who shared the same fate a little later got "a good deal frayed at the edges," not having a skirt.

Then there was the fauna—snakes, for instance: one specially venomous was killed by the Fans and they had it for supper: "That is to say, the Fans and I; the others would not touch it, although a good snake properly cooked is one of the best meats one gets out here." There were elephants also. Leading alone along the

<sup>1</sup> *Travels*, p. 273.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 270.

track, as her habit was after a halt, for the hunter-men marched too fast for her to keep pace, she ran into a herd of five and watched their sport. The Fan hunter who joined her refused to try a hunt; they were too few and must save their powder and shot for other eventualities. It was to him she owed another great sight when he signalled her to follow him on a crawling approach to one of the plantations near a Fan town.

After about fifty yards of this, Wiki sank flat, and I saw before me, some thirty yards off, busily employed in pulling down plantains, and other depredations, five gorillas: one old male, one young male, and three females. One of these had clinging to her a young fellow, with beautiful wavy black hair with just a kink in it. The big male was crouching on his haunches, with his long arms hanging down on either side, with the backs of his hands on the ground, and palms upwards. The elder lady was tearing to pieces and eating a pineapple, while the others were at the plantains, destroying more than they ate.

They kept up a sort of whinnying, chattering noise, quite different from the sound I have heard gorillas give when enraged, or from the one you can hear them giving when they are what the natives call "dancing" at night. I noticed that their reach of arm was immense, and that when they went from one tree to another, they squattered across the open ground in a most inelegant style, dragging their long arms with the knuckles downwards. I should think the big male and female were over six feet each. The others would be from four to five. I put out my hand and laid it on Wiki's gun to prevent him from firing, and he, thinking I was going to fire, gripped my wrist.

I watched the gorillas with great interest for a few seconds, until I heard Wiki make a peculiar small sound, and looking at him saw his face working in an awful way as he clutched his throat with his hand violently.

Heavens! I think, this gentleman's going to have a fit; it's lost we are entirely this time. He rolled his head to and fro, and then buried his face into a heap of dried rubbish at the foot of a plantain stem, clasped his hands over it, and gave an explosive sneeze. The gorillas let go all, raised themselves up for a moment, gave a quaint sound between a bark and a howl, and then the ladies and the young gentleman started home. The old male rose to his full height (it struck me at the time this was a matter of ten feet at least, but for scientific purposes allowance must be made

for a lady's emotions) and looked straight towards me, or rather towards where that sound came from. Wiki went off into a paroxysm of falsetto sneezes the like of which I have never heard; nor evidently had the gorilla, who thinking, as one of his black co-relatives would have thought, that the phenomenon favoured Duppy, went off with his family with a celerity that was amazing the moment he touched the forest, and disappeared as they had, swinging himself along through it from bough to bough, in a way that convinced me that, given the necessity of getting about in tropical forests, man has made a mistake in getting his arms shortened. I have seen many wild animals in their native wilds, but never have I seen anything to equal gorillas going through bush; it is a graceful, powerful, superbly perfect hand-trapeze performance.

But she adds in a footnote:

I have no hesitation in saying that the gorilla is the most horrible wild animal I have seen. I have seen at close quarters specimens of the most important big game of Central Africa, and, with the exception of snakes, I have run away from all of them; but although elephants, leopards, and pythons give you a feeling of alarm, they do not give that feeling of horrible disgust that an old gorilla gives on account of the hideousness of his appearance.<sup>1</sup>

That is all she tells of gorillas in the book; but reading it carefully, I find in a passage about the swamp which had to be crossed to reach Ndorko on the Rembwé, an account of the sudden disappearance under water of the leading man, "carrying a good load of bottled fish and a gorilla specimen." Fish of course she was always collecting, but there is no mention of how she came by the fragment of gorilla. I conclude that it had been part of one about which she told me one afternoon in our little Chelsea drawing-room.

"The nearest I ever was to a gorilla," she said, in answer to a question, "was when I was up in the bush with some cannibal Fans." (At this point another visitor dropped her teacup on the floor—in evident dismay as to the sanity of this demure spinster in black.) She went on to explain that there was a family of them,

<sup>1</sup> *Travels*, p. 267.

and the rest went away, but the male stood there roaring and advanced. "I asked the Fan beside me if he had not better shoot," she said, "for he was looking very nasty. 'I must wait,' he said; 'the other man's powder is wet.' So he waited till the muzzle almost touched, and then blew the creature's chest in.<sup>1</sup> When we got to the village and told them we had killed a gorilla, they made a great fuss of us, which was pleasant, for we had not been sure we should not be killed and eaten. But it seemed that they had just had a man killed by a gorilla. The spirit of scientific inquiry woke up in me, and I told my men to ask 'How does a gorilla kill?' The next minute, I was being dragged along through the village and out into the bush, wondering what it was all about, till they began to dig in the ground, and then I saw I was to have ocular demonstration. The gorilla had just caught him round the breast and torn the shoulder-blades clean out."

In a way she was a strong-stomached traveller; horrors did not abate her passion for experience. Yet she had certain repugnances, even in the pursuit of science. Coming down the river from Lembarene on this journey, the bird life delighted her, from the great vulture, "the skin of which I will take home before I mention even its approximate spread of wing," and the hornbills, big as hen turkeys, with their peculiar cry easily mistaken for a native horn, down to the lovely whistler who ushers in the dawn. "I expect an ornithologist would enjoy himself here," she adds, "but I cannot—and will not—collect birds. I hate to have them killed anyhow, and particularly in the barbarous way in which these natives kill them."

<sup>1</sup> Mary Kingsley told this story to the Eton boys, when invited to lecture to them on her travels. She told it as a proof that the African native was no coward. What the boys, however, were quick to notice was that standing beside the two Fans with their guns had been this quiet Englishwoman, unarmed, and the burst of applause which followed the story surprised the lecturer, but showed their appreciation of the fact.



It is more important perhaps, though hardly less significant, that she never fired a shot in Africa, nor ever raised her hand nor caused a hand to be raised against a native. Neither did she think that she lowered herself in their eyes by sharing their way of life—indeed, quite the contrary. Her authority depended first on the prestige of her race, and secondly on her willingness to face any danger. Here is a passage which illustrates her whole attitude. In crossing the swamps to the Rembwé, whoever was in the lead went in to find a ford, the black batter-like ooze sometimes coming up to his neck before he succeeded—with the chance that a hole in the swamp might occur; “and where a hole is found the discoverer is apt to leave his bones in it.”

If I happened to be in front, the duty of finding the ford fell on me; for none of us after leaving Éfoua knew the swamps personally. I was too frightened of the Fan, and too nervous and uncertain of the stuff my other men were made of, to dare show the white feather at anything that turned up. The Fan took my conduct as a matter of course, never having travelled with white men before, or learnt the way some of them require carrying over swamps and rivers and so on. I dare say I might have taken things easier, but I was like the immortal Schmelzle, during that omnibus journey he made on his way to Flaetz in the thunder-storm—afraid to be afraid. I am very certain I should have fared very differently had I entered a region occupied by a powerful and ferocious tribe like the Fan from some districts on the West Coast, where the inhabitants are used to find the white man incapable of personal exertion, requiring to be carried in a hammock, or wheeled in a go-cart or a bath-chair about the streets of their coast towns, depending for the defence of their settlement on a body of black soldiers. This is not so in Congo Français, and I had behind me the prestige of a set of white men to whom for the native to say, “You shall not do such and such a thing”: “You shall not go to such and such a place”—would mean that those things would be done.<sup>1</sup>

I have dwelt on this passage of her travels because it was certainly the most difficult and adventurous; but in picking out the salient points, one misrepresents the

<sup>1</sup> *Travels*, p. 276.

character of her narration, which is mainly made up of jesting over details, when it is not engaged upon expounding some custom, or the like; as, for example, this section of the adventure is woven in with an account of rubber-collecting and the trade in rubber, very detailed and also very amusing, which leads up to a natural history of the black traders and the reasons why it is not only convenient but necessary for them to have wives echeloned along their route.

The story of her arrival at her destination on the Rembwé, and her going thence down to the Gaboon, is hardly less full of incident than that which I have summarised. But I need not follow this or the other episodes—her visit to the island of Corisco, and finally her ascent of Mungo Mah Lobeh, the great peak of Cameroon—which was the final adventure. It leads her to vehement laudation of the German officials, and denunciation of Germany's government, which "has one of the main English faults in an emphasised state—namely, a want of due apprehension of the worth of the men who serve her in Africa." It leads also to this other dictum: "I am devoted through ill and good report to my first cousins, the German and the Dane."

Her insistence on the Nordic strain in her was partly a phase of the time: there was much writing about Latin and Teuton, and M. Demolins' book on "The Superiority of the Anglo-Saxon" had a great vogue in England. But undoubtedly her physical type was markedly Scandinavian. The affinity with Germans had a different kind of reality; their literature and language had grown into her mind. Later than this, when there was question of translating her book, she wrote to George Macmillan:

I am more keen to stand straight with the Germans than with most men, for I know if it were possible to translate my vernacular they would understand me easily, and more easily than the English public; for I think fetish in German and express it in Hammer-smith.

But, so far as *Travels in West Africa* is concerned, her main tribute goes out to those who are not her cousins—the French. This is due to the fact that her work lay mainly in Congo Français, where there was no competition between the French and English interests. Had she gone, as she proposed, to the Niger Company's territory, she would have experienced at least a divided admiration. As it is, practically the whole of a chapter is in praise of "the greatest of all West African explorers, M. de Brazza." This contains one general passage which has bearing on her own opinions and her own achievement.

It requires, indeed, some one who has personally sampled Africa to form a just estimate of the value of certain bits of work from what I may call an artistic standpoint. The "arm-chair explorer" may be impressed by the greatness of length of the red-line route of an explorer; but the person locally acquainted with the region may know that some of those long red lines are very easily made in Africa—thanks to the exertions of travellers who have gone before, or to what one of my German friends once poetically called the lamb-like calfheadedness of the natives, or to the country itself being of a reasonably traversable nature. In other regions a small red line means four hundred times the work and danger, and requires four thousand times the pluck, perseverance and tact. These regions we may call choice spots.

I do not mean to deprecate the value of extensive travel in Africa, far from it. It has an enormous value, and so obvious a one that I need not dwell on it; but the man who combines the two—who makes his long red line pass through great regions of choice spots—deserves special admiration; and when, in addition to traversing them, he attains power over the natives, and retains it, welding the districts into a whole, making the flag of his country respected and feared therein, he is a very great man indeed. Such a man Mr. Stanley might have been had it not been for matters I will not enter into here, for it would involve us in a discussion on the Congo Free State.<sup>1</sup>

A little further on she describes the conclusion of de Brazza's negotiations with Makoko, the high chief who ceded to him a tract of country on the shores of the Congo :

<sup>1</sup> *Travels*, p. 354.

De Brazza then planted the French flag before Makoko's house, saying, "This is the symbol of friendship and protection which I will leave with you. Wherever waves this emblem of peace there is France, and she will cause to be respected the rights of all those whom it covers."

I have no hesitation in saying that as far as Congo Français goes (I have no other experience of other French possessions), this high-flown statement is true; and although de Brazza did a good thing for France that day, Makoko also did well, for he saved himself from the Congo Free State.<sup>1</sup>

Then she devotes herself to championing the repute of another great French explorer, Du Chaillu, saying that not only she, but Dr. Nassau holds that Du Chaillu relates nothing that might not have happened in the Ogowé region:—

More can be said of no one of the school of travellers of which Du Chaillu, Dr. Barth, Joseph Thomson, and Livingstone are past masters, and of which I am an humble member. We have not a set of white companions with us to confirm our statements and say, "*Oui, oui, certainement, Monsieur,*" as the engineer and his brother used to say on the *Eclaireur* [an Ogowé boat] to their captain; but we have great compensations for this. We have no awful rows with each other in inconvenient places in Africa, or on our return home, and we can say to our critics: "Have you been there? No! Then go there or to whatever place you may happen to believe in! and till then—shut up!"<sup>2</sup>

These people with whom she identifies herself are those who did not shoot their way through Africa, but whose line of route lay mostly through places where travel for a European was then possible only by facing extreme danger. Several of them were of course, and had to be, big-game hunters; they were not the less of her tribe for that; but on this matter she must describe her own special complex and its reactions.

I may remark that my nervousness regarding the big game of Africa is of a rather peculiar kind. I can confidently say I am not afraid of any wild animal—until I see it—and then—well, I yield to nobody in terror; fortunately, as I say, my terror is a

<sup>1</sup> *Travels*, p. 360.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 368.

special variety; fortunately because no one can manage their own terror. You can suppress alarm, excitement, fear, fright, and all those small-fry emotions, but the real terror is as dependent on the inner make of you as the colour of your eyes, or the shape of your nose; and when terror ascends his throne in my mind I become preternaturally artful, and intelligent to an extent utterly foreign to my true nature, and, save in the case of close quarters with bad, big animals, a feeling of rage against some unknown person that such things as leopards, elephants, crocodiles, etc., should be allowed out loose in that disgracefully dangerous way, I do not think much about it at the time. Whenever I have come across an awful animal in the forest and I know it has seen me, I take Jerome's advice, and instead of relying on the power of the human eye, rely upon that of the human leg, and effect a masterly retreat in the face of the enemy. If I know it has not seen me I sink in my tracks and keep an eye on it, hoping that it will go away soon. Thus I once came upon a leopard. I had got caught in a tornado in a dense forest. The massive mighty trees were waving like a wheat-field in an autumn gale in England, and I daresay a field-mouse in a wheat-field in a gale would have heard much the same uproar. The tornado shrieked like ten thousand vengeful demons. The great trees creaked and groaned and strained against it, and their bush-ropes cables groaned and smacked like whips, and ever and anon a thundering crash with snaps like pistol-shots told that they and their mighty tree had strained and struggled in vain. The fierce rain came in a roar, tearing to shreds the leaves and blossoms and deluging everything. I was making bad weather of it, and climbing up over a lot of rocks out of a gully bottom where I had been half drowned in a stream, and on getting my head to the level of a block of rock I observed right in front of my eyes, broadside on, maybe a yard off, certainly not more, a big leopard. He was crouching on the ground, with his magnificent head thrown back and his eyes shut. His fore-paws were spread out in front of him and he lashed the ground with his tail, and I grieve to say, in face of that awful danger—I don't mean me, but the tornado—that depraved creature swore, softly, but repeatedly and profoundly. I did not get all these facts up in one glance, for no sooner did I see him than I ducked under the rocks, and remembered thankfully that leopards are said to have no power of smell. But I heard his observation on the weather, and the flip-flap of his tail on the ground. Every now and then I cautiously took a look at him with one eye round a rock-edge, and he remained in the same position. My feelings tell me he remained there twelve months,

but my calmer judgment puts the time down at twenty minutes; and at last, on taking another cautious peep, I saw he was gone. At the time I wished I knew exactly where, but I do not care about that detail now, for I saw no more of him. He had moved off in one of those weird lulls which you get in a tornado, when for a few seconds the wild herd of hurrying winds seem to have lost themselves, and wander round crying and wailing like lost souls, until their common rage seizes them again and they rush back to their work of destruction. It was an immense pleasure to have seen the great creature like that. He was so evidently enraged and baffled by the uproar and dazzled by the floods of lightning that swept down into the deepest recesses of the forest, showing at one second every detail of twig, leaf, branch, and stone round you, and then leaving you in a sort of swirling dark until the next flash came; this, and the great conglomerate roar of the wind, rain and thunder, was enough to bewilder any living thing.

I have never hurt a leopard intentionally; I am habitually kind to animals, and besides I do not think it is ladylike to go shooting things with a gun. Twice, however, I have been in collision with them. On one occasion a big leopard had attacked a dog, who, with her family, was occupying a broken-down hut next to mine. The dog was a half-bred boarhound, and a savage brute on her own account. I, being roused by the uproar, rushed out into the feeble moonlight, thinking she was having one of her habitual turns-up with other dogs, and I saw a whirling mass of animal matter within a yard of me. I fired two mushroom-shaped native stools in rapid succession into the brown of it, and the meeting broke up into a leopard and a dog. The leopard crouched, I think to spring on me. I can see its great, beautiful, lambent eyes still, and I seized an earthen water-cooler and flung it straight at them. It was a noble shot; it burst on the leopard's head like a shell and the leopard went for bush one time. Twenty minutes after people began to drop in cautiously and inquire if anything was the matter, and I civilly asked them to go and ask the leopard in the bush, but they firmly refused. We found the dog had got her shoulder slit open as if by a blow from a cutlass, and the leopard had evidently seized the dog by the scruff of her neck, but owing to the loose folds of skin no bones were broken and she got round all right after much ointment from me, which she paid me for with several bites. Do not mistake this for a sporting adventure. I no more thought it was a leopard than that it was a lotus when I joined the fight.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Travels*, p. 543.

One of her theories was that the leopards were terrified by a European woman's dress, and in talking over this particular incident she suggested that the skirt had greatly helped the cold water. She might perhaps have accounted in the same way for another case in which one of these creatures "let her off"; but it is a story that I never heard, and one of those which she would have been least disposed to print, as there was no possibility of pretending that the leopard might as well have been a lotus, or a lamb. Mrs. George Macmillan, however, heard the tale and preserved it. She did well, for it is the extreme characteristic expression of Mary Kingsley's nature and explains better than a volume could why she had power.

Once in the bush, as she and her party came in to a village, they found a leopard caught in a game-trap by some kind of snare; struggling, snarling and roaring, as one can well imagine. The African method was to leave it till it wore itself to death; but when night came and Mary Kingsley shut herself up in her allotted hut, the cries of the magnificent creature became more than she could bear. So, going out into the dark, she found herself in terror because she had not stayed to put on boots and the chance of walking on a snake was formidable. Africans, as all soldiers who have served in Africa report, never move about by night, probably for this among other reasons. When she reached the trap, guided by the leopard's eyes blazing like lamps in the dark, she did not say she was frightened as she set to the business of pulling out the stakes, keeping away as best she could from her captive, though in one of his frantic dashes he ripped her skirt from top to bottom. But she accomplished her object of pulling away all but the last, which she reckoned that the leopard would be able to pull for himself. She was right: he did. But then, to her dismay, instead of bolting into the bush as she expected, he came and began to walk round her, sniffing at her; and she was frightened with a vengeance. Fear,

however, had its usual effect; instead of bolting she said firmly, "Go home, you fool." And the leopard went. A moment after, she heard a violent rustling in a tree behind her; something dropped with a thud, and then she was aware of it crawling about her feet. It was one of the Fan hunters, who had seen her go out, followed her and when he saw her go to the trap, thought the best place for him was up a tree. When he heard her speak to the leopard and saw it obey her, he concluded that she was some kind of divinity and came down and made obeisance.

I am well aware that there is nothing of her way of telling this story in the way I tell it, except the form of her command, which is textual. But if Mary Kingsley habitually treated her own proceedings as a joke, that is no reason why we should do so.

There are of course many passages in all her writing where the manner of her discourse changes. It is in the main ultra colloquial, and deliberately so. It was part of her instinct for life. She wrote as she did, not because she thought it the best kind of writing, but because it came to her so. "I am popular because I am natural," she wrote to Mr. Kemp, warning him against trying to write too grandly, when he also essayed a book. But in the descriptions she is not really speaking, but singing. Some of her readers—notably her cousin, Charles Kingsley's daughter, whom we know as the writer Lucas Malet—wanted more of the descriptive writing: I think, wrongly; there is plenty, but it is never allowed to pall on us. In her own way, grammatical or ungrammatical, Mary Kingsley was a born writer, and in her own way, a poet. Here I have for once to try and reconcile two statements of hers which appear flatly to contradict each other—though she was perhaps the most veracious person I ever encountered. But the contradiction really arises from the ambiguity of that word, poetry.

I had told her in a letter that, knowingly or not, she



had annexed Stevenson's phrase, "the bright eyes of danger," which indeed might have been invented for her who loved them so well. She answered:—

It sounds as if one had heard it long ago. Somehow all poetry that I love, when I first read it, seems not a new thing, but the reawakened memory of something I knew untellable ages ago. I wish I could write poetry. I should have some faith in having insight if I could. But it isn't in me, and I never even tried to write a line of verse except "The night we left Canary homeward bound"—the only existing copy of which I was fortunate to secure the other day and burnt it. The song may go on some day to improvements now it is unfettered by a text; it was popular because you could go on making new verses to it all the time; it was as elastic as the British constitution.

Yet she writes to George Macmillan in March 1897:—

"This London life takes all the go out of me. I have not written a poem for months, which is an awful bad symptom for me. All those bits the papers say are pretty are of rough rhyme stuff with some of the rhyme knocked out afterwards."

The best plan is to take one of these passages, for instance this description of sailing back in a crowded boat with a negro missionary for skipper from Corisco to Gaboon:—

I sit by the rudder watching the black heaving ocean, too rough for the weak moon to brighten save when it flies aloft in angry white foam and surf over the shoals and rocks; and the dimly moonlit sky with the clouds flying in the ever-blowing upper wind from the equator; and the motionless black line of the forest with the soft white mist rolling low and creeping and crawling out between its stems from the lagoons behind the sand-ridged beach. The mist comes stretching out from under the bushes over the sand towards the sea, now raising itself up into peaks, now crouching down upon the sand, and sending out long white arms or feelers towards the surf and then drawing them back as if it were some spirit-possessioned thing, poisonous and malignant, that wanted to reach us, and yet is timorous and frightened of the surf's thunder roar and spray. It gets over its alarm after about an hour, however, and comes curling out in a white wall, and during the rest of the calm before the dawn-wind comes, wraps itself round us, dankly-smelling like some foul corpse.

I don't think this sort of mist is healthy, but it is often supremely lovely and always fascinates me. I have seen it play the weirdest tricks many a time, in many a place in West Africa. I have, when benighted, walked hurriedly through it for miles in the forest while it has mischievously hidden the path at my feet from the helpful illumination of the moon, swishing and swirling round my moving skirts. I have seen it come out of the forests and gather on the creek before and round me when out o' nights in canoes, gradually, as we glided towards the breeze-swept river, forming itself into a great ball which has rolled before us, alongside, or behind us, showing dimly now in the shadow, ghostly white now in the moon-shine, and bursting into thousands of flakes if the river breeze when it met it was too strong for it; if it were not, just melting away into the sheet of mist that lay sleeping on the broad river itself. Now and again you will see it in the forest stretch up a gradually lengthening arm, and wind it lazily round and round some grand column of a tree-stem, to the height of ten or twenty feet from the ground, spread out its top like a plume and then fall back again to the mist-river from which it came. It has weird ways, this mist of the West Coast. I have often, when no one has been near to form opinions of my frivolity, played with it, scooping it up in my hands and letting it fall again, or swished it about with a branch, when it lay at a decent level of three or four feet from the ground. When it comes higher and utterly befogs you, you don't feel much inclination to play with it. The worst of it is, you never quite know how high it is coming. I have seen it rise out of Bimbia flats and cover the Great Cameroon as though it said, "Ah, you are great Mungo, but I am grander—I am Death."<sup>1</sup>

I detect no rhyme in that, but in parts there is obviously a sort of rhythmic chant, helped out by alliteration, such as one finds again and again in the work of her real master, Dickens. I do not know that Dickens at any time ever wrote verse: he is one of the few great imaginative prose-writers who never sought this form of expression; but beyond question he is a lyrical writer again and again. She, who in a sense was not imaginative, who invented nothing, but recorded actual experience, had singularly little instinct for strict form, and the recurring pattern of verse would have hampered

<sup>1</sup> *Travel*, p. 417.

her movement. But she knew the intoxication of words, the delight of fixing in another medium the remembered image of what had charmed her senses—making her song of the night, of the sea, of the swift river, or the tornado tearing through the forest. These were her poems; and it was not less through this lyrical delight than through her perpetual play of humour that she won her audience. Indeed, the delight went deeper. Other travellers have seen as much, have perhaps had as much courage; but it was her supreme gift to transmit what she had experienced, because it had been felt with such a passionate exaltation, and because she had the artist's gift to reproduce not only the phenomena, but also the mood which they engendered.

## CHAPTER VI

### SOME UNPUBLISHED TRAVELS

It has been said in the last chapter that Mary Kingsley did not give by any means a full account of what she called her "picnics" in West Africa. She published only so much as she thought would justify her claim to speak on native law and religion and on trade matters with the authority of one who had been there. But one of her letters says that she had "covered hundreds of miles in country where no white had been before her."

It has been noted also that she travelled as a trader and that she took her trading seriously; it would not have been playing the game unless she tried to make a profit.

Now, I find myself able to supplement some of the omissions in her book, and to give some notion how her trading was conducted, by this reprint of one of her lectures, delivered more than a year after her book of *Travels* appeared. It is well worth saving, for it gives a good idea of all the ingredients in the salad which she made so acceptable to the public—from the erudition of the opening to the power of humorous narration and even, at the end, the poetry. There is just this to be noted. She tells of her trading with the usual humorous exaggeration, not of facts, but feelings, and here, as in many cases, she speaks of being "terrified." That was literally a figure of speech. After her death a letter appeared in the *Spectator* of June 23rd, 1900, signed by Mr. Lewis Lusk, concerning what he calls "a peculiar personal trait of this great Englishwoman":—

She was quite ignorant of physical fear, a rather rare character-

istic among women. "Have you never known what it is to be frightened, or at least flustered, when you saw death not only staring into your face, but also shouting into your ear?" I once ventured to ask, as she paused from telling an escape from drowning in a cataract. She replied quite candidly: "I have never felt that. I don't know what it is; I have an idea that if once I *did* feel so, I should collapse entirely. But whenever I have been in real instant danger, which simply needed every effort of every bit of me, I had a strong salt taste in my mouth. Whenever I feel *that*, I know I've got to take myself as seriously as I know how."

She once told E. D. Morel (so he says in a posthumous notice of her) that "there never was any danger." This of course refers to dangers from men, because rapids, crocodiles, gorillas, leopards and so forth are indisputably dangerous. But it is interesting to try to find out what she meant, and I think a passage from her *Travels* should be quoted for better understanding, all the more that I have mentioned that she left her revolver behind before going up the Ogowé. Why exactly she did that, one can only conjecture; but it assuredly was not because she did not feel competent to use it. Her mother, we have her authority for saying, was an accomplished revolver shot; presumably George Kingsley instituted practice in the back garden at Highgate, and his daughter was not the one to be left out of such entertainments. At all events, if she left her revolver behind, it is plain from what shall be quoted that she expected and advised other people to carry theirs. She has been discussing the characteristics of her favourite African, the Fan, whom "other people who should know better than I say is a treacherous thievish murderous cannibal."

I never found him treacherous; but I never trusted him, remembering one of the aphorisms of my great teacher Captain Boler of Bonny, "It's not safe to go among bush tribes, but if you are such a fool as to go, you needn't go and be a bigger fool still, you have done enough." And Captain Boler's other great aphorism was "Never be afraid of a black man." "What if I

can't help it?" said I. "Don't show it," said he. To these precepts I humbly add another. "Never lose your head."

My most favourite form of literature, I may remark, is accounts of mountaineering exploits, though I have never seen a glacier or a permanent snow-mountain in my life. I do not care a row of pins how badly they may be written, and what form of bumble-puppy grammar and composition is employed, as long as the writer will walk along the edge of a precipice with a sheer fall of thousands of feet on one side and a sheer wall on the other; or, better still, crawl up an arête with a precipice on either. Nothing on earth would persuade me to do either of these things myself, but they remind me of bits of country I have been through where you walk along a narrow line of security with gulfs of murder looming on each side, and where in exactly the same way you are safe as if you were in your easy-chair at home, as long as you get sufficient holding ground, not on rock in the bush village inhabited by murderous cannibals, but on ideas in those men's and women's minds; and these ideas, which I think I may say you will always find, give you safety. It is not advisable to play with them, or to attempt to eradicate them, because you regard them as superstitious; and never, never shoot too soon. I have never had to shoot, and hope never to have to; because in such a situation, one white alone with no troops to back him means a clean finish. But this would not discourage me if I had to start; only it makes me more inclined to walk round the obstacle, than to become a mere blood-splotch against it, if this can be done without losing your self-respect, which is the mainspring of your power in West Africa.

As for flourishing about a revolver and threatening to fire, I hold it utter idiocy. I have never tried it, however, so I speak from prejudice, which arises from the feeling that there is something cowardly in it. Always have your revolver ready loaded in good order, and have your hand on it when things are getting warm, and in addition have an exceedingly good bowie-knife, not a hinge-knife, because with a hinge-knife you have got to get it open—hard work in a country where things go rusty in the joints—and hinge-knives are liable to close on your own fingers. The best form of knife is the bowie, with a shallow half-moon cut out of the back at the point end, and this depression sharpened to a cutting edge. A knife is essential, because after wading neck deep in a swamp your revolver is neither use nor ornament until you have had time to clean it.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Travels*, p. 329.

That indicates sufficiently what she means by saying there never was any danger.

I must add this note also. In what follows she speaks of her successes as a leading criminal lawyer among the Fans. Now, in so far as discussion could be conducted through the medium of "trade English," there is no possible doubt that she handled that idiom with fluency, gusto and feeling for all its capabilities. But it is clear that in some of her adventures, if not in those referred to here, she was among people who spoke always their own language, and she must have relied largely on an interpreter. She had evidently acquired some little of the native tongues, but her whole residence in Africa was not long enough to give her mastery of any one language: and there are many. Those who are best qualified to judge are amazed by nothing so much as by the sort of divination through which she, without any adequate means of complete communication, arrived at the heart of conceptions foreign to the European mind. For the best qualified least dispute the accuracy of her conclusions: how she reached them without knowledge of the tongues is to them a mystery and a marvel.

The lecture, of which the main part shall now be reproduced, began with topics familiar to her—the unhealthiness of West Africa, its value to Europeans, the necessity of reaching that value through co-operation with the natives, and therefore the importance of understanding native custom and law. On this hint she proceeds:—

Unfortunately there has been a lack of interest in the study of law and institutions of West Africa, except in the case of several eminent Germans—Lunz, Bastian, Buckholz and Kohler—and that great Englishman, Sir A. B. Ellis; in consequence of this lack of interest the knowledge of the affair is in much the same state as our knowledge of Indian law was before the time of Sir W. M. Jones, and it thereby falls out that coupled with the home apathy towards West Africa, the governmental policy there has

been one of lethargy accompanied by unpleasant spasms. But important as I feel this study of the native law is, it is only a fit pursuit for any person like myself, who has not a wife and family, and whose friends cheerfully state they are quite prepared to put up a memorial window, failing the arrival of the remains. The African, has, however, during my two sojourns in his midst, been really most kind and civil; in spite of my being a very trying person, he has exercised great patience towards me, and he has tried to make the best of me all the time. My African friends have used me as a doctor, an artisan, a prophet, a charm against the small-pox, and have had hopes of turning me into a General; so far they have never despaired of me, and I know when I return to them they will again try to make me useful, before cooking me, which is by white friends prophesied as my natural end.

The African seems to me a very fine fellow in his way. I have tried to honestly and fairly understand the West Africans by studying them in their native homes. I find I get on best by going among the unadulterated Africans in the guise of a trader; there is something reasonable about trade to all men, and you see the advantage of it is that, when you first appear among people who have never seen anything like you before, they naturally regard you as a devil; but when you want to buy or sell with them, they recognise there is something human and reasonable about you, and then, if you show yourself an intelligent trader who knows the price of things, they regard you with respect, but if you go in for trading knowing nothing about prices, etc., they, very properly, regard you as a fool.

Just put yourself in their place and imagine a gentleman of inky complexion, mainly dressed in red and white paint, human teeth, and leopard tails and not too much of them, suddenly arriving in a village hereabouts. After the first thrill of excitement his appearance gave had passed away, and he was found anxious to sell something, anything, say bootlaces, he would be taken much more calmly than if he showed no desire to do business at all.

The trading method enables you to sit as an honoured guest at far-away inland village fires; it enables you to become the confidential friend of that ever-powerful factor in all human societies, the old ladies. It enables you to become an associate of the confraternity of Witch Doctors, things that being surrounded with an expedition of armed men must prevent your doing.

The worst of the trading method is it entails on you an unfashionable degree of hard work on your elementary subjects—



namely, the details of the West Coast trade. The cloth that will sell in one place, won't be looked at in another; the bead one district will buy, another won't; the thing one district takes as a regular coinage equivalent, is as nought in another. The things you get offered in exchange for your goods—timber, rubber, ivory, gold and palm oil—are each a separate education in themselves. The trade I have studied most thoroughly is the bush trade in ivory. Ivory is the most fascinating thing in all West Africa. It is impossible to explain here the peculiar and powerful fascination that ivory exerts over the minds of men, black or white, who once fall under its sway.

I own I like those sort of people, and that many of the happiest days in my life have been spent among their more uncivilised relations inland, yet I own also that I get considerably terrified by them at times. Being an ethnologist, I know of course within a little what the West African is likely to do, but the gifted man who compiles *Old Moore's Prophetic Almanac* could not know exactly when the West African will be likely to do it; herein comes the element of danger. For example, one day when pottering about the Ouronogou country, with a choice band of blacks in a canoe, we, thinking no evil, paddled into a narrow river, when, to our considerable alarm, a gentleman appeared upon the bank, and after some dismal howls fired at us with a gun. I have a mortal objection to being fired at with the form of gun prevalent in West Africa; they are loaded with all sorts of hard oddments; they give a most alarming bang, and always hurt someone, usually the firer only, but occasionally other people. The only time I was hit by a charge from one of them, mostly bits of old iron cooking-pots, it took me months to get these antique relics out of my ankle, and I am sure they are in my constitution still—but that is another story—and so when this gentleman fired, and knowing from good advice and experience that the best thing when you are fired at by an isolated native is to rush at him and prevent his reloading and firing again, I sprang out on to the bank, and went after that gentleman, now in full retreat down the narrow bush-path, pursued in my turn at a respectful distance by a devoted member of my crew shouting for me to come back. I, however, caught my flying friend by his powder-bag, and most civilly asked him "Why?" and as by now some more of the crew saw the affair promised to give entertainment without danger, they joined us, and by this means, for they knew his language, I found out that the gentleman was suffering from severe domestic affliction and merely wanted to interest our sympathy and help in the affair. You see, one of his wives had

run away with a gentleman from another village, and that village was too powerful for his village to tackle on the point right away. Therefore it was necessary for them to get allies, and so according to the custom of the country he lay in wait for any canoe from yet another village to come by and then fired at it. If he killed a member of the canoe crew, the rest of them and the village they belonged to would have to come and help him attack the village of the gentleman who had stolen his wife, and by so doing driven him into shooting one of them—an affair, you see, that was no fault of *his* at all, but entirely *that other man's*. This was so sweetly reasonable that I was charmed with it, and moreover I found that it was local law, that if, after being called on to an affair, you refused to act, you became the enemy of both parties concerned in the matter. Therefore I with my crew joined this gentleman's party.

Now my crew had guns of their own, but I can honestly say I never knew those guns to deprive a living thing of life; on the other hand, I heard the village of the gentleman who had stolen the lady had guns of a *most* deadly character, and plenty of them. Putting these two things together, I was in favour of peaceful arbitration, although the others were in favour of looting the erring man's village, and taking its store of ivory and rubber, which my band and I should have shared with our village elders. But I carried my point, the palaver was talked out, talked by the yard and by the hour, and we got the thing finally arranged on an ivory basis whereby we—that is to say, our village elders, our afflicted gentleman, and my crew—all made a little something substantial, and at the time it was said everyone concerned was satisfied, but I to this day wonder if that other gentleman did not subsequently form the opinion that he paid rather dear for the lady he lured away. I, as the rank outsider, was chief justice, and I did my best, but it was difficult to judge that lady's true value, for the elders of her original husband's village painted her as with a worth far above rubies, quite the most precious woman of modern times; while, on the other hand, the elders of the village who had to pay for her drew a very different picture of her character and personal attractions. This affair brought home to me how impossible it is to understand the African, how unjust it is to judge him, unless you will go and tackle him on his native bush-path. In his calmer moments he is capable of being very trying.

I may confide to any spinster who is here present and who feels inclined to take up the study of him, that she will be perpetually embarrassed by inquiries of, Where is your husband? not, Have

you one? or anything like that, which you could deal with, but, Where is he? I must warn her not to say she has not got one; I have tried it, and it only leads to more appalling questions still. I think that it is more advisable to say you are searching for him, and then you locate him away in the direction in which you wish to travel; this elicits help and sympathy.—Gentlemen and ladies alike will confront the difficulty of inquiring after their hostess. African courtesy requires you to do it, but you cannot say to your host, I hope your wife is well; that would be invidious in a land where wife is plural. The safest way to deal with this difficulty is, I think, to say, How are they all at home? I regret to say you rarely get a satisfactory answer.

There is another point which must be taken into consideration in connection with this study of native law, and that is the sort of country you have to live and get about in. I have attempted to give some description of the sort of thing you have to deal with, in a book I published after my second voyage, but there is one region which is particularly rich in information which I have not sketched, the Ouronogou country.<sup>1</sup> You find the most unadulterated Africans naturally in the sort of country where other races have not interfered with them, that is to say, in regions where the white races have not been able to flourish, on account of the unhealthiness, and where Mohammedans have not penetrated owing to an aversion to dense forests. This region is pre-eminently the great one of the African Forest belt, which, as you know, goes almost across that Continent in its equatorial regions, and which you get at its densest in the Western region of Africa—between the Niger and the Congo. The whole of this splendid schoolroom is covered with a dense high grand forest, so luxuriant in growth that the few missionaries, traders, and agriculturally-minded natives who live in it have to fight back the forest as a Dutchman fights the sea. The main population there are *not* agricultural, but nomadic, predatory tribes like the great Fan and Akele. The highways through this country are naturally the rivers, and the greatest of these rivers between the Niger and the Congo is my well-beloved river Ogowé, which lies nearly on the Equator for 700 miles of its course and which throws into the Atlantic 1,750,000 cubic feet of water per second, and which has 500 miles of rapids; 400 miles of great water-way, continuous on its main course. Certainly they are the most glorious things I have seen in my life. But certainly next to them is the Ogowé

<sup>1</sup> It was also particularly dangerous, and her omission in the *Travels* of this part of her journey is very characteristic.

region of the Ouronogou country, which, as you may know, is the region on the north bank of the lower Ogowé. You can go into the Ouronogou country as I did by coming down the Ogowé and turning in at any place you may see fit. The Ogowé for 130 miles of its lower course is walled by great cliff-like walls of forest—forests that rise up out of its dark brown waters in unbroken cliffs to the height of 150 and 200 feet, and when you are on your first trip to the Ouronogou country this way, you do not give a thought to having to go into the face of that forest wall. You think your canoe-men are taking you to some place where there is a river entrance that they know of; but presently you come to a place where the forest wall on the north bank sweeps away in a bay-like curve, the splendid white-grey columns of its giant cotton and redwood trees looking like the façade of some vast inchoate temple; then your canoe flies round, and charges into the papyrus reed bank with which the bay is filled, and you spend maybe an hour, maybe several, pulling it onward through those kings of all the water-reeds, and, having passed through them, you do not come to a bank, but find the water goes on into the forest, and on into that great glorious strange world of gloom and grandeur you go too. One hundred and fifty feet above you now there is a dense canopy, formed by the interlaced crowns of the trees, and their infinity of bush-ropes and parasitical plants, that shuts out all the sky; around you on all sides in the green gloom are countless thousands of grey bare tree-columns, as straight as ships' masts, and between them a twisted medley of great bare black bush-ropes, looking as if they were some Homeric battle of serpents that at its height had been fixed for ever by some magic spell, while beneath you and away into the shadowed vastness lay the stagnant currentless dark waters, making a floor for the forest, a floor whose face is like that of a mirror seen in gloom—dimly showing you the forms outside it, seeming to have in it, images of unknown things. Your canoe sweeps surely on through the tree-columned aisle, until you reach a slight clay mound that is above water-level. On it there is the village your companions were making for. Every house in that village stands upon stilts—very rickety stilts that look as if the house had taken to them some night hurriedly, when an extra rise in the water round threatened to wash it away and gave it no time to get proper ones. There are not many villages in this sort of country, the few that there are are on clay mounds, and are inhabited by people who are down after the fishing at certain seasons of the year only, whose real villages are away on the slopes of the strange bubble-shaped

forested mountains that here and there rise out of the level of the Ouronogou swamp. But in spite of the mosquitoes that abound; in spite of the way crocodiles come among the stilts of your houses at night and swish about with their tails in a way that makes you think that if those crocodiles are not more careful they will certainly have the house and you down on the top of them; in spite of there being no chickens in the village, also because of the crocodiles; in spite of there being no children brought there, for the same sufficient reason; in spite of the whole air being laden with the stink of putrefying fish offal, and several other little drawbacks like that, I know a village in that Ouronogou country that stands among the walling trees of a broad lake, and I would gladly be there now, because in the morning time (while black night was still around me) I could look up and see Mount Santatong's summit far away, taking on to itself in flushes of daffodil, amethyst and rose, the light of the dawn, and I should hear the plantain birds whistling their long mellow calls to the dawn, for it comes among us and makes everything glorious with colour, warmth and beauty, while the night, accompanied by its crocodiles, slides away down into the dark waters. It is like a vision of Heaven. It does not last long; the white mists soon curl up out of the swamp waters round you, and wrap you up in their chill embrace for hours, and then they fade away and leave you with the grey sky overhead again, a heavy grey sky that seems to rest on the tree-tops during the dry season, and of course if you are not on a lake you cannot see your vision at all, because you are too shut in, and you only know when the dawn is come by the chill of it and the mist creeping up in the swamp forest round you—coiling and twisting among the tree-columns like vast serpents, playing with wind as only West African mists can.

While in this country I inadvertently had several collisions with crocodiles. Once an hippopotamus and I were on an island alone together, and I wanted one of us to leave. I preferred it should be myself, but the hippo was close to my canoe, and looked like staying, so I made cautious and timorous advances to him and finally scratched him behind the ear with my umbrella and we parted on good terms. But with the crocodile it was different. At one of these Ouronogou villages there was a man named Nohumba who had had three separate wives bitten by one crocodile at different times, when they had been fetching water from the bank-side. I was in touch at the time of catastrophe No. 3, and as I was coming down the hen-roosty ladder from her house after bandaging her up, I saw her husband Nohumba, and I asked him

*why* he did not catch the crocodile. He said respectfully that there were reasons—his gun. “Don’t so much as mention that gun,” I said, “after yesterday’s performance”—yesterday’s performance having been the accidental discharging of that hoary weapon through the bottom of a canoe, whereby I and some more friends of Nohumba’s, and that worthy himself, had come near being drowned. “Catch the crocodile with a hook!” He grinned, and said you could not. “You’re wrong, my friend,” I said, “it’s been done,” and Nohumba became interested. He was getting used to me, and he gleefully suggested I should catch that crocodile with a hook. “Very well,” said I, “you and half-a-dozen other men come with me to the pool before sundown.” And I spent the rest of the day cutting wood-hooks, and securing the interior arrangements of a goat that had been killed, and requisitioning the village for its best bush-rope, and a billet of bar-wood to serve as a float, fixing the hooks and the bait on carefully, *à la* Waterton; and sundown found us with our paraphernalia at the pool, making no end of a fuss. Three of us, I being one, got into a canoe with the hook and tackle, leaving the shore end of the bush-rope in charge of the rest of the party on the bank, and having fixed on our bar-wood float, we commenced a wordy discussion as to the best place to sink the bait, so that the crocodile *could not* miss coming across it. We finally hit off the correct spot to a nicety. Before the hooks had touched the thick brown water, the crocodile’s jaws rose then and there out of it, and closed over the bait with a snap. We, being severely frightened, automatically hung on to the line; the crocodile gave that swing of the head they always do when seizing things. Over went the canoe, and there we were, crocodile and all, in the water together. Needless to say, before proceeding further with this undertaking, we made for the bank. On reaching the bank, I said to my companions, “There, *you* have made a pretty mess of it. Why in the name of common sense didn’t you fellows at the shore end of the rope hold on when you saw us upsetting?” We let the crowd on the bank know, within a little, what we thought of people who just howled and danced when they saw devoted members of society, trying to catch a man-eating crocodile, upset and pretty well killed *through their foolishness*. This being done, I smoothed things over by congratulating everyone on the fact that the principle and practicality of catching crocodiles with hooks were demonstrated; all that was now required was a *little* more caution in the application of the method, and something to kill the crocodile with when it had been caught—things we had forgotten before, although we

knew what he had swallowed would not even give him indigestion. The next day I was sent for early to a village to see a man who was ill, and I was away with him all day, not returning to my village until about 11 p.m. When paddling myself alone in a tiny one-man canoe up the creek towards home, I heard a sound of revelry by night which astonished me, for my village usually retired to bed about nine o'clock. On arrival I found high festival; they all alone and by themselves had caught that crocodile with a hook, and were having some for supper. I was besieged by accounts of the triumph. One gentleman who had a nasty wound from a blow from the crocodile's tail was *the* hero of the evening, and receiving much attention from the ladies, who had done him up with suitable leaves. Nohumba, however, claimed *the* credit of the performance, loudly, in consequence of having shot the crocodile with his gun, the only one in the village. Like *all* great men in Africa, he had his detractors. Particularly critical of his performance was a gentleman who said, "If Nohumba had emptied his weapon *entirely* into the crocodile instead of partially into it and partially in another gentleman's legs, it would have been better," and considering the trouble it gave me, tired as I was, to extract part of Nohumba's charge from those legs, I quite agreed with him; but on the whole it was a triumph and we rejoiced exceedingly.

I will give you my first experience of trading methods. I ignorantly embarked on this in the middle of the terrible cannibal Ba-Fan tribe, and in a region made in a wild way, and adjoining the Sierra del Crystal range, where it meets the Ogowé upper basin in the Okono affluent. I had made friends with three choice spirits, ivory-traders of the Ajumba tribe, and I persuaded them to let me go with them on one of their trips after ivory. They were to take me and my little belongings in their canoe to a village, and were to give me a most excellent character to the local nobility and gentry. I told them what to say, and paid them for saying it, to prevent mistakes, and then they were to leave me there and go higher up the river on their own business, and call for me on their way down. They duly took me, gave the village the idea that I was *just* the sort of thing to improve the local social tone, and left me. I was horribly nervous when they did, for on our way up to it we had come across a gentleman who danced and howled on the bank, and wanted to sell something badly as we were a trading company. We went for him like an arrow, thinking it might be a tooth—an elephant's I mean, not his own. It wasn't—it was a leg—not his own either, but the leg of a

gentleman of some kind. This upset my companions and made them sick, and it and their conversation on those Fans which followed, made me nervous.

The first night, however, that I was there, something happened. It was just before what we call out there *the second making-up of the fire*, say 3.30 a.m. The moon had been shining, but had set, and so it was inky dark, when there came a tremendous bellow and a crash. The whole line of huts, in one of which I was, was shaken and wrenched almost off the ground, which quivered in rapid pulsations; then came another crash, quicker than one can say, and another bellow, and a something went tearing away into the dense high dark forest that surrounded the village. I need hardly say the Fans were by this time in the street with lights, to see what had happened. What had happened was plain enough. That something had torn its way right through the village at the further end, smashing down the frail huts and scattering the people in them, and their possessions. What had done it of course the Fans knew, but I did not for a time, because they were too busy yelling and using bad language against the thing to tell me. The families whose homes had been broken up were taken in by their neighbours for the night, and the row was just commencing to subside, and I making my mind up to go indoors again, when again came the bellow and the crash and the earth quiver, and right through the south end of the village an immense hippopotamus tore full tilt, and went splash into the river. The animal was about twelve feet long, and bulky as a small elephant, and weighed a ton or two. Of course this quite took up the rest of the night, and was not done by breakfast-time. Meantime I learnt that it is the habit of these great river beasts to come out of the river at night and go and feed on the natives' farms, if there were any handy; and as each hippopotamus's stomach holds between five and six bushels, they cause an acute form of agricultural depression. They are also very nervous creatures and prone to get flurried when on land, and now and again, when the moon has gone down on them while away destroying crops, one of them gets separated from the others; it loses its head and its way, and dashes to and fro until the daylight comes. If you can picture to yourself a furniture-van in hysterics, you will realise the sort of thing that went through that unfortunate village in the middle of the night.

The next morning the Fans turned their attention to me, and started selling to me their store of elephant tusks and indiarubber. I did not want those things then, but still felt too nervous of the



Fans to point this out firmly, and so had to buy. I made it as long an affair as I could, and was very frightened all the time I was doing it, because I had given my word to the white and black traders not to spoil prices, namely, not to raise prices by giving more than the customary value, and I gradually found myself the proud owner of balls of rubber and a tooth or so, and alas! my little stock of cloth and tobacco all going fast. Now, to be short of money anywhere is bad, but to be short of money in a Fan village is extremely bad, because these Fans, when a trader has no more goods to sell them, are liable to start trade all over again by killing him, and taking back their ivory and rubber and keeping it until another trader comes along. So I kept my eye up-river most anxiously on the look-out for my black-trader friends' canoe, and for days in vain. All my trade-stuff was by now exhausted, and I had to start selling my own belongings, and for the first time in my life I felt the want of a big outfit. My own clothes I certainly did insist on having more for, pointing out that they were rare and curious. A dozen white ladies' blouses sold well. I cannot say they looked well when worn by a brawny warrior in conjunction with *nothing* else but red paint and a bunch of leopard tails, particularly when the warrior failed to tie the strings at the back. But I did not hint at this, and I *quite* realise that a pair of stockings can be made to go further than we make them by using one at a time and putting the top part over the head and letting the rest of the garment float on the breeze. But I had too few, and they were all gone before that canoe came, indeed, everything but what I stood up in was. The last thing I parted with was my tooth-brush, and the afternoon that had gone, down came the canoe, just as I was making up my mind to set up in business as a witch-doctor. The black traders said they were very glad to see me again, but I should have a very hard time if I came down with them, because *they* also had sold right out, and therefore dare not call at any village before reaching the main river. I said, "Oh, don't mention that, *pray*. I'll come with you," and to the grief of those Fans, I left them.

We did have a pretty hard time. We could only travel at night, for fear of being seen, so every morning, as the dawn showed, we took the canoe into a bank of great water-reeds—things some twelve to fourteen feet high—and lay there all day, hidden, but not happy, because these reed-beds swarm with flies, and our respective heaps of indiarubber used to get soft and sticky in the heat, and when any one of us dropped off to sleep against one, we stuck to it, and had to be peeled off. The ivory we had with

us stank as only fresh ivory can, and of course attracted more flies from Africa at large. However, there it was, and there we were, and so we dozed and ate and played a game called "warry" with little beans, on board all day. As soon as night came down—fortunately for us there was no moon—we softly stole out on to the river, and two of us kept the canoe on her course by just steering, one from each end, with a paddle, where the current was strong, or cautiously paddling under water, so as to make no noise, where the current was slack. This went on all night, broken only by catastrophes such as running full tilt into floating trees or great pinnacles of rock—things that seemed to be the kernels of all the extra dark places, and the worst of it was, we were obliged to keep our feelings on the subject of these catastrophes to ourselves, for fear of being heard by any local natives.

But I would go back to that canoe again to-night, for the beauty of the scene was beyond description. The river here was narrow, though very deep, and ran between great heavily-forested mountain walls of the range of the Sierra del Crystal, and their noble summits stood out clear and black against the star-lit purple sky. The air around us was be-gemmed with fireflies, and so heavy with the scent of flowers that we smelt them above the stench even of our own ivory, and every now and again we dropped down past a native village, seeing the natives dancing by the light of the fires, and hearing the thump, thump, thump, of their drums, and the long-drawn melancholy cadence of their song.

It is in regions such as these that the charm of West Africa seizes on you, a charm, that once you fall under its sway, you never escape from. I know I have wearied you here and elsewhere by my diffuseness regarding things West African, but there is one thing I know I have not sufficiently brought home to you, and that is the charm of West Africa. It is a thing difficult to explain to some people, but I am sure there are among you here people who know by experience the charm some countries exercise over men—countries very different from each other and from West Africa. The charm of West Africa is a painful one. It gives you pleasure to fall under it when you are out there, but when you are back here, it gives you pain, by calling you. It sends up before your eyes a vision of a wall of dancing, white, rainbow-gemmed surf playing on a shore of yellow sand before an audience of stately cocoa-palms, or of a great mangrove-walled bronze river, or of a vast forest cathedral, and you hear, *nearer* to you than the voices of the people round you, *nearer* than the roar of the city traffic, the sound of that surf that is beating on

the shore down there, and the sound of the wind talking in the hard palm-leaves, and the thump of the natives' tom-toms, or the cry of the parrots passing over the mangrove swamps in the evening time—and everything that is round you grows poor and thin in the face of that vision, and you want to go back to the coast that is calling you, saying, as the African says to the departing soul of his dying friend, "Come back, this is your home."

I have broken my narrative, in order to rescue this characteristic passage from the limbo of an old magazine, not easily accessible.<sup>1</sup> But it serves also to sum up the pursuits of her playtime, her "skylarking or study." After this second journey, playtime was over for ever. Work began when she reached England, luring her like a snare, till she was held fast in a net of obligations from which only death set her free.

<sup>1</sup> *The Cheltenham Ladies College Magazine*, No. xxxviii. Autumn, 1898.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE WRITING OF HER TRAVELS

WHEN Mary Kingsley landed at Liverpool on November 30, 1895, the interviewers, as has been said already, were waiting for her; and doubtless *The Times* report was not the most sensational. At all events, there was enough stir over her to suggest a topic to the *Spectator*—which then, more than perhaps at any other time, expressed the mind of serious educated Englishmen. The article was headed "Negro Capacity" and it began thus: "Among the accounts now appearing of Miss Kingsley's adventures in the Cameroons the question which all African narratives suggest comes to the mind: 'What makes the African continent so bad?'"

The writer, who spoke of the Africans as "a people abnormally low, evil, cruel," was undoubtedly Meredith Townsend, less well known than his colleague Hutton, but a more brilliant journalist, and by long residence in India familiar with the problems of the coloured races. His outlook was typical of the attitude which Mary Kingsley was to find prevailing then in the best minds.

The article admitted that African brains could in certain cases house a fine intellect; it cited Bishop Crowther and Mr. Blyden, pure-blooded Africans of West-Indian birth, who held their own beside any European. What was lacking then, it asked, to "abolish an apparently irredeemable proclivity to barbarism?"

"It is a problem," the writer went on, "which Europeans must study and must solve if they are to govern the vast continent in peace and security, without those bursts of savage and demoralising severity by which at

present their authority is everywhere in Africa still maintained. . . . They have made the African a slave instead of treating him as a child to be turned into a man." Or at other times "in our recoil from our old diabolical severity, we have set the negro too free, and instead of replacing the régime of will by the régime of vivifying law, we have granted self-government, for which he was not prepared."

The conclusion showed a turn of thought certainly not calculated to commend itself to lovers of the African.

"We know nothing of the Divine purposes, and we have in Australia one visible proof that it is not always what we are pleased to call progress. . . . The Australian blacks had accomplished nothing and had in no way prepared Australia for a higher race, and they have passed and are passing away. The destiny of the negro may be of this kind, and the negro race may be for ever useless in our eyes, as were the worms in those of Darwin's gardener."

Mary Kingsley could not sit down under all this, and on December 21, 1895, she plunged, for the first time, I think, into print; but at a very great disadvantage. Brevity was never her talent, and in truth she needed a book to reply in: to explain, for instance, that the *Spectator* conceived of all men as belonging to one race, varying in degrees of development; whereas to her the African was no more an undeveloped European than a woman is an undeveloped man. Again one thing above all was certain to her about the negro, that he showed no sign of disappearing. Not unnaturally, she tried to say everything at once and failed. But she promptly disavowed responsibility for what was said in these interviews. "The accounts that are appearing are not my accounts, and I do not like to think I have done anything to bring the African into further disrepute. . . . I do not place him below the other coloured races, possibly because I have not lived among them and

attempted to understand them; possibly because I have lived among and attempted to understand the Africans."

Unluckily, she did not limit herself to that. For instance, cannibalism had been urged against them in the *Spectator*; she replied that cannibalism was not universal; but she added that the tribes which practised it in the culinary form were the finest people in West Africa. This not unnaturally lent itself to be construed as a defence of cannibalism. Finally, in the concluding sentence she went out of her way to make trouble for herself:—

I do not believe the African to be brutal or degraded or cruel. I know from experience that he is often grateful and faithful and by no means the drunken idiot that his so-called friends, the Protestant missionaries, are anxious, as an excuse for their failure in dealing with him, to make him out.

Not a word had been said in the *Spectator* about missionary testimony; but she was evidently convinced that this journal, regarded as the country parson's paper, took its views from missionaries; and in this first bout she hit out wildly and without control of her temper. The *Spectator*, writing another article on "The Negro's Future," spoke of her "singular letter" and called it "cynical." Yet within a year she had learnt to state the most controversial views with disarming good humour, and no paper attached more weight to her testimony than the one against which she splintered, somewhat acrimoniously, her first lance.

Meanwhile her celebrity had begun. On Christmas Eve her friend Dr. Guillemard wrote from Costebelle:—

I am quite a distinguished person here because I am a friend of M. K. I entertain the dinner-table with anecdotes—how you invariably travel disguised as an Arab sheikh and generally have a well-hung leg in your portmanteau—your special object in visiting Africa being to report on the suitability of Man as an article of diet. Your book should run, I estimate, to about the 60th thousand—like Mrs. Henry Wood's *East Lynne* or Zola's *Le Débâcle*.

Dr. Guillemard was to have more to do with the book than he knew then; for she naturally looked for help in many quarters, and he was indicated as the suitable person to revise it in the interests of scientific accuracy. But he felt called upon to extend his mission to general literary advice, which led to friction. Indeed, there was a great deal of advice volunteered and even pressed on her. "One monthly magazine after another is now asking me for articles, pointing out that it will be good for my book," she wrote to her publisher. Both publisher and Dr. Guillemard dissuaded her from such forestalling; but she found her own way to a shrewd compromise. The book was taking shape and coming down to reasonable dimensions. "There certainly will not be more than 600 pages," she wrote to George Macmillan on February 11: (but this was a sanguine estimate). "I am rigorously cutting out all the poetry and bad language, except the native legal oaths."

Valuable assistance, moreover, was forthcoming. In January she went to Liverpool, presumably to find help in the section of her work which was to deal with trade. "The trade appendix, which is the most important part of it to my way of thinking, is being revised by Liverpool experts and not by Dr. Guillemard," she wrote, after Dr. Guillemard's interference with her literary style had begun to get upon her nerves. The importance she placed on this aspect of her work never varied. When a cheap edition was in prospect, she cried out against the proposal to drop this appendix. "Of course it and the Fetish chapters are the only really valuable parts of the book, and I only wrote the rest to prove that I had enough experience to justify my writing on Fetish and trade and labour." Moreover, she insisted that if there were to be any omissions, "I must be able to say that Trade and Labour is word for word what I said at first."

For widespread controversy had risen on these matters, in which the general public took an interest. Fetish,

though not less important to her, was an affair for the inner circles of scientists. But on that early visit to Liverpool she gained assistance on Fetish which filled her with joy. One of the great African Secret Societies was the Egbo, which dominated all the Calabar region; and very occasionally a white man was initiated into its rites. It was her luck to meet one of these.

I got hold of an Egbo man, one of the only two white ones living, to go through the MS. for me, which is a grand stroke of good fortune.

The results of his revision are recorded in a letter to George Macmillan :—

I enclose the Egbo man's letter on bit 2 of the fetish and am *very* vain of having passed him successfully. You have no idea how difficult it is to get *real* information about native religions. It is easy enough to get all sorts of rubbishing stories, but to get the underlying idea is a very hard thing. Mr. Forshaw has lived almost all his life among the Calabar natives as a trader and knows them better than any man now living, since my dear old friend Captain Boler of Bonny is dead.

Other good news was sent promptly to her friend and publisher in the middle of February :—

Forgive me for bothering you again, but this is mere vanity and requires no answer. I have just returned from Dr. Günther at Kew and have had the verdict on my collection. There is one absolutely new fish which he has, without asking my leave, named after me; six modifications of known forms which have had to have proper scientific names given to them; one fish that seems to give him especial joy, for he says only one specimen of its kind has ever been seen and that was brought over forty years ago from the Nile : one absolutely new snake : one lizard the B.M. have been waiting for for ten years; and altogether forty-three different species of fish are represented in the collection—valuable for “distribution”; so I can now say Dr. Günther is satisfied with my work : he wants more at once of course, and I am glad, for I was beginning to fear I was an utter windbag.

But one trouble remained and was never defeated. Obviously the book wanted a map; and the publishers



submitted what they proposed to use. She rose in fury:—

I have got the name in Liverpool and on the Coast of knowing more about the geography of the West Coast as a whole than anyone, and for me to issue a sketchy skeleton that would not pass muster at a missionary meeting—well, I'd rather be excused.

The fact was that it had been her purpose to "travel the uncharted," and nothing was available. To make her own map would, she reckoned, take her three months, and in her opinion the book had "already overstayed its market." In the end it appeared mapless; and when the question was raised again for the cheap edition, no solution could be found. Her refusal to accept a make-shift shows how tenaciously she held to her reputation among those for whose judgment she cared—members of her own free masonry, initiates of the Coast.

Her first public appearance was in Edinburgh before the Royal Scottish Geographical Society; and her account to George Macmillan shows that she had felt some diffidence when confronted with the typescript of what she was to read. The whole letter may be given: it contains the first of many jokes about her impact on typists, and the end testifies that her early habits of laborious domesticity never left her.

. . . I for the first time in my life went and bothered Mary [Lucas Malet] with it, knowing that she, being a relation, would feel it her bounden duty to enlarge upon its errors. This she did, pointing out the fearful crime in it of misquoting Burns. What struck her as most remarkable about it was the way the typewriter had been able to read my handwriting and the artistic merit the typewriter had invested the whole thing with in the way of spelling. After this she was highly complimentary and only saying that the descriptions should be longer, which I do not believe. I enclose a Scotch comment on me which has irritated me of course, but the Scotch seem to have on the whole understood me perfectly, not so some distinguished English friends who are now attacking me for speaking "flippantly on cannibalism." I am afraid you have taken up with a complicated criminal. Anyhow, I have got a new fish called after me by Günther and may

have a snake when specimens arrive from Leyden to be compared with it, and these things ought to shed a sort of glow of respectability over me.

I have been wretchedly ill all this past week and mostly on the top of a pair of steps house-cleaning, or I should have been to see Mrs. Macmillan. I will send you a large instalment of MS. this week.

The address (printed in the Society's Proceedings) opened by explaining why she had concentrated her efforts on the Ogowé country. Her aim had been to get together a collection of fishes from a river north of the Congo, for the Congo's terrific current makes a great impression on distribution; and the rivers at Calabar did not yield what she wanted. There was, further, an interesting difference in the forms of the native religion between the regions north of Calabar and those south of it, and since her own chief interests (apart, that is, from the British Museum's commission) were fetish and native law, she had been "anxious to go on with local observations commenced in 1893."

Then came a tribute. She had, she said, "received the greatest assistance from Miss Mary Slessor, that most wonderful and brave lady who lives at Okyon and whose guest I was for some part of my five months in Calabar and whose humble admirer I shall always be."

The main part of her discourse concerned the geography of the Ogowé, "this magnificent river not having been much visited by Englishmen since du Chaillu made his journeys in this region." She gave an outline of her journey, and very sketchy it was. "I will not enter into the subject of the rapids, but confine myself to the new route I followed to the Rembwé, disclaiming any intention either to recommend it or appropriate any credit to myself for taking it. When I was told no one had ever been that way before, I said, 'Wise men.'"

There is a sidelight here on what happened when she made her way back from the Rembwé to civili-

sation at Glass. "Well knowing my wanderings through the Fan country would not meet with approval, I said I had done it from scientific motives. 'No, Miss Kingsley,' said my English friends, 'you fell into the hands of the Fans and they took you touring about the country like a circus.'" And she admitted there was "some truth in the statement." One gleans also from the lecture what the book omits to state, that if her Fans took her into the village where one of them was wanted for murder, another for theft and the third for a very bad wife-palaver, it was simply because they knew they could buy rubber cheaper there by a leaf the bale. (Leaf of tobacco, of course.) Also, having sketched the trouble which followed before she could extricate her carriers, she observes, "Nothing but my interest in native law could have helped me to live through those word-swamps of palaver, and enabled me to become the renowned Criminal Court lawyer I now am among the Fans."

From her very brief mention of the ascent of Cameroon, we learn the reason why she chose to ascend from the landward side, instead of the easier route. It was because she was "anxious to see the trend of the Rumbi and Umon mountains. These are practically the same, and will I believe be found continuous with and of the same formation as the Sierra del Cristal"—which she had reconnoitred in her inland journeyings. Her scientific interests were not confined to fish and fetish and native law.

In the following month, March 1896, she lectured before the Geographical Society of Liverpool, and here we find not only the scientific observer, but the champion of causes. Briefly, the cause she championed was the trader's; but the trader's was to her the cause of England. Here for the first time she expounded Imperialism as she conceived it in regard to West Africa.

The opening of the lecture was the same as in Edinburgh—the tribute to Mary Slessor, and also to her

friend Mr. Hudson, Hatton and Cookson's agent-general. What she chose to describe fully here was her ascent of Cameroon, and all this is in her book. But the Gorilla land wanderings were not wholly neglected; she gave to Liverpool what was bound to interest Liverpool—her observations on rubber collecting, and on the methods of adulteration employed by the simple native. Ivory was of interest to her, and we find here what is nowhere else in print, a description of an elephant hunt conducted by the Fans, "in a disgracefully unsportsmanlike way" with a stockade and shooters posted in the trees. Eight elephants were killed, and two men crushed flat on that occasion, which she does not think worth mentioning in her *Travels*.

But the pith of her address to Liverpool came at the end.

I think trade is the most important thing in West Africa, and, next of course to fish and fetish custom, it is the most interesting. It seems to me that to set about developing the natural resources of our possessions and not to trouble our heads about getting more territory, as a certain class of politicians are fond of advising us to do, is like getting expensive furniture into a house that has no roof on it; for the internal resources of our possessions mainly consist of malaria, mud and mangroves. The trade articles—rubber, ivory and palm oil—that come up in great quantities from our possessions is all trade from the interior. Were it not for the Royal Niger Company, who have done and are doing a work of which every Englishman should feel proud, our position as regards opening up and exploiting the interior would be a very despicable one; for where outside the Company can you find Englishmen worthy to be named as explorers in the same breath with de Brazza, Binger and Dr. Zintgraff? I am told the present value of our coast possessions is between three and four millions sterling annually. It will not be that long if we do not possess ourselves of the interior trade routes and we shall some day find our West Coast possessions a set of fossils all along the line.

That was her retort to the "certain class of politicians" who still held by the spirit of the Resolution of 1865 and wanted to avoid extending commitments in West

Africa. But she had more to say. The fame of Cecil Rhodes was then at its height, and English imperialists were thinking in terms of a Cape-to-Cairo railway. Now, she had long before this made close alliance with Sir George Goldie: when she praised the Niger Company to a Liverpool audience she could not count on applause, for its interests and those of the individual trading firms were not easily reconciled. But the policy which she went on to advocate was one which followed the line of Sir George Goldie's thought rather than that of Rhodes. Goldie did not believe that lines of European traffic were ever likely to run north and south in Africa. Trade seeks the sea by the shortest route, was his axiom, and England held ports on the east and west to which the traffic of Africa's rich central regions would flow naturally if means of transport were provided.

His conception has been fulfilled, as the world knows, for the countries lying west of Lake Tchad; but Mary Kingsley's vision pictured a trade-belt traversing the undeveloped continent, not lengthwise but across. She sketched this boldly.

I think the present duty of our explorers and Government now lies in connecting our Niger Coast possessions with those in British East Africa. Thanks to the Company, we have a fine frontage on the west shore of the Lake Tchad and if we can gain a sphere of influence over Wadai, the thing is done.

It was to be the climax of her disappointment that within another two years political developments had rendered impossible the realisation of this far-reaching hope. But for the moment she had considerations to urge immediately affecting the West Coast. Each of the British possessions was then threatened by activities that would render them a series of *enclaves*, cut off from the free and fruitful trade with the rich interior: atrophied and fossilised by failure of blood supply.

"Sierra Leone since the last delimitation with France in 1895" (after the Waima clash) "has entered into

this fossil state. Our chance still lies open behind the Gold Coast, Lagos, and the Niger delta, but it will not remain open long."

Two energetic competitors, France and Germany, were in the field. "I will not call them enemies, because a person who goes and takes what you are too lazy to take yourself is not an enemy, however much you may require the thing he takes." It was true that in French and German possessions the actual trade was, and might remain, in British hands. But it was not trade in British manufactures because the prohibitive tariffs on all manufactures save their own imposed by these nations forced the English trader to deal in goods of French or German manufacture. A railway from Lake Tchad to the French Congo, then projected, would form a great outlet for trade behind the Niger Coast. Then came passing but significant allusion to a matter on which she was to be in fierce controversy. Such a rival rate would specially drain the English markets, if any further legislation were passed which would "cut off the most valued trade commodity"—in other words, spirits. She was to stand for Liverpool's right to trade freely in liquor.

This question had different facets. In the main she resented the attacks made by missionaries on traders, whom they accused of seducing the natives into debauchery by the temptation of poisonous spirits. In missionary opinion, the African was not fit to be trusted with gin. Her answer was, first, that this libelled the African, who was no more habitually drunken than the European in British cities; secondly, that if the spirit sold was poisonous, it should be produced for analysis. She had submitted several samples when there was complaint and found that the gin was of ordinary quality. Thirdly, she pointed out that the African of the Coast insisted on having alcohol, and if he could not get European spirit, drank palm-wine; the results of a debauch in that case being much more prolonged and unhealthy.

On other grounds she refused to believe that the

trade in spirits was morally destructive; whereas, considered as an article of commerce, gin had great merits. It was one of the few things which the climate did not damage, and consequently it was largely bought by the middlemen tribes, not for their own use, but for transfer to the interior.

There was, however, another aspect. Liverpool traders were at feud with the Niger Company on this issue. The Company, whose sphere extended over the region between Lake Tchad and the Niger and over all the Fulani states, prohibited the import of any liquor, and with Mary Kingsley's entire approbation. All this country was Mohammedan, and it would, she said, be a crime to bring in alcohol where it was forbidden by native religion and custom. None the less, the Company's area included many pagan peoples, and Liverpool believed that gin came up for these areas, through the Company's own stores. It certainly, as Mary Kingsley knew, got there. But this was one of the points on which she found it difficult to represent at the same time the Company's point of view and that of the other traders: though in essentials she was in sympathy with both.

Still, the main point for her in the whole matter was that traders in West Africa were doing England's work, not their own merely; doing it at deadly peril, yet the risk was worth it. Here is the concluding passage in which from passionate argument she slips back to jest; but her last word is the gravest:—

I do not believe any part of Africa north of the Zambesi and south of the Sahara is healthy for white men, and this unhealthiness, which is at its hugest on the West Coast, is the great hindrance to development and exploration of the Coast regions. "There's nothing hinders a man, Miss Kingsley, half so much as dying," said a friend out there to me the other day who had very nearly put his opinion to a practical test. The cargoes from the West Coast might truly be described in the words of the old song: "Wives an' mithers maist despairin' ca' them lives o' men." Yet grievous as is this price to us who know the men personally, England gets grand equivalent value for it, for England requires

markets far more than colonies. A colony drains from the mother country yearly thousands of the most able and energetic of her children, leaving behind them their aged or incapable relations; whereas the holding of the West African markets drains a few hundred men only—only too often for ever; but the trade they carry on and develop enables thousands of men and women and children to remain safe in England in comfort and pleasure, owing to the wages and profits arising from the manufacture and profit of articles used in that trade. So I trust those at home in England will give all honour to men who are still working there, or who are lying buried in the weed-grown, snake-infested cemeteries and the pathless swamps of the Coast; and may England never again dream of forfeiting or playing with the conquests won for her by those heroes of commerce, whose battles have been fought out on lonely beaches, far from home or friends and often from another white man's help, with none of the anodyne to death and danger given by the companionship of hundreds of fellow-soldiers in a fight with a foe you can see, but with an enemy you can see only in the dreams of delirium which runs as a poison in aching brains and burning veins.

I may be regarded as unduly prejudiced in their favour by having known these men individually, but I assure you that the very mean opinion they have openly expressed as to my intelligence in going out there after beetles and fishes was quite enough to make a naturalist like myself prejudiced permanently against them. Nevertheless, I own they have given me the greatest assistance, and it is owing to them and to their influence and power over the natives that I have been able to do anything worth the doing that I have done, and I have always found them men I was proud to be allowed to call friends and know were fellow-countrymen, for, as has been well said, "of such is the kingdom of England."

In both these lectures she was already the propagandist; but in print she was a combatant. Her encounter with the *Spectator* had left her with the determination to fight where she had elbow-room, and the *National Review*, then edited by Leo Maxse, that born lover of a good fight, gave her the opportunity. In March 1896 he published her article on what she called "The Development of Dodos." Here again one finds her hitting with more venom than in her maturer period: all the essential substance of what she said will be found in her



chapters at the end of the *Travels* with the sting left out. But it was openly an attack on missions, as they were generally conducted. Here is a typical passage :—

The failure of the English Protestant missionaries in West Africa to recognise the differences between the minds of the Africans and their own, and their tendency to regard the African minds as so many jugs which have only to be emptied of the stuff which is in them and refilled with the particular doctrine they, the missionaries, are teaching, is certainly one of the primal causes of the mission failures, by eliminating those parts of the fetish that are a wholesome restraint and putting in their place the doctrine of forgiveness of sin by means of repentance. They intend to repent, it is true; but the popularity of a (to me) very unpleasant little hymn on the South-West Coast that has a chorus of

“ A little talk with Jesus  
Makes it right,  
All right ”

demonstrates their view of the affair : no doubt sound doctrine, but bad for negro morals.

There are, however, many graver things in this article, and observations that showed more insight—as, for instance, this defence against the accusation of cruelty, based on the slaughter of slaves at a chief's funeral :—

The apprehension of the importance of burial rites is quite Greek in its intensity. Given a duly educated native of the Gold Coast or the Niger delta, I am sure he would grasp the true inwardness of the “ Antigone ” far better than any living European.

Still, she knew she had been letting herself go, and wrote to her publisher :—

I am very glad you do not furiously disown me for the *N.R.* article. I was afraid of your doing so. I have been to-night to a gorgeous dinner given as a farewell to Sir Augustus and Lady Hemming who are going out as Governors (I say so advisedly) to British Guiana. Sir Augustus read it in proof and highly approved of it, and of course the whole Liverpool party are jubilant over it, making me feel like a hired assassin for Liverpool; but Sir Francis de Winton, who was present, was equally with me on main issues. It will be a big fight before it is done, so I am

keeping all my heavy guns in reserve; but do not be alarmed that I intend to make my journals a battle-ground, and the great respect and esteem I have for several individual missionaries will prevent me from saying all I know about the bad effects of their teaching. I know that to state certain facts which they could not contradict would be hitting below the belt, and as a Kingsley I must fight fair.

Over and above the writing of articles, and these carefully prepared discourses in Edinburgh and Liverpool, she seems to have done a good deal of miscellaneous lecturing—probably for charity. She tells Macmillan on April 20: "I had a great series of adventures in Vauxhall on Saturday, when I gave with the assistance of a reformed omnibus-driver a magic-lantern entertainment." And a week or so later: "I have been at Birkenhead giving a magic lantern entertainment at the Y.M.C.A. in aid of a home for dissolute girls under the auspices of the elders of the Presbyterian Church."

"Dissolute" is a joke, of course, somebody's variant of destitute. The odds are that Miss Slessor had something to do with this performance: it may have been simply an act of homage to the Church she worked for. Mary Kingsley was against missionaries, in many ways; but she subscribed, and largely, to the funds of certain missions, for the sake of such people as Miss Slessor, Dr. Nassau and her friends on the Ogowé.

The fame of her as a lecturer had gone out already, for she writes on June 1: "One thing I am quite sure of I will not do, that is accept the offer, Rose (Kingsley) brings me and go lecturing in America."

But she was completely businesslike about the necessity of selling her wares. In May she gave Maxse another article for the *National Review*, on "Fishing in Africa," and in June the *Cornhill* had a paper on "Black Ghosts"—the chief interest of which to me is its incidental proof that she knew Clovelly, as a Kingsley should. Dr. Guillemard remonstrated about this forestalling of interest; but she wrote to Macmillan: "My commercial

instinct tells me that if I had not done so, I should have been forgotten by now." She goes on: "What a magnificent book Dr. Gregory's *Great Rift Valley* is. If I could write like that, you would see me swelling about with new clothes all over me."

It troubled her, then and thereafter, that, having so much to say, she could not say it to her liking. At first she was inclined to submit meekly to Dr. Guillemard's assistance, and he was still busy on the narrative part of her *Travels*, which they then proposed to bring out as an introductory volume, keeping the more scientific parts for a second book. Yet even in this letter of May 21 to George Macmillan there emerges a hint of rebellion:—

. . . I feel very flattered by Dr. Guillemard's editing of this book and not so much surprised that he has cut out so much as that he has left in so much, and what pleases me most is that when he has taken a great washey paragraph, with all the words adrift in it, he has put it into a terse statement which is what I wanted to say myself, and this shows that the original was comprehensible, a thing I was by no means sure of.

It was amusing reading it. I had so totally forgotten writing it in that way, and I see the difference between it and the present book.<sup>1</sup> That I wrote with my eye on the English Public. In the ordinary way, everything I write now is written with one eye on Günther and one on the Coast. Fortunately the English Public seem to understand me, even when unedited, as I am in the *National Review*, for I have had four applications from editors of other magazines since the article in this month's, and all sorts of wild letters. I enclose you one which will amuse you; it is from Walter Pater's pet pupil, a truly "precious" person, who takes about a century and a half over each sentence and when he has written it finally says, "there, that is quite perfect." I am keen to see this book of his. Charley and I never thought he would live to get it done, and although he declares he saw my ability, he used to sit on a proper coloured chair, in the perfect attitude and say I had an "almost incomprehensible inclination towards simply brutal phenomena." I send my ju ju editor's<sup>2</sup> final letter on the Fetish. This good honest old soul would never

<sup>1</sup> That is, the introductory part.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Forshaw.

have said what he did unless he meant it. He told me in '93, when I first met him, that I should never find out anything about Fetish. He, old Boler, since dead, and Dr. Nassau are the *only* people, unless I may be allowed now to join the band, who do know anything about this extremely early form of the religious idea. After I have made two more journeys to West Africa, if I survive, I shall be able to give you a compendium of it. I have been reading Mr. Robinson's "Hausaland" seeking for ju ju facts, but, as usual, he does not seem to have cared about this subject, although it is the *only* way by which you can understand and thereby govern, and improve the African. He cites two cases, one of what he calls a grave at Warrie. It is not a grave. I know Warrie well, and spent some time among the Egnwo and Ibbibios. They do not bury by the river-bank, but under the huts. What he saw was either a soul's bed, or a M'biam charm over a fishing-net. The other case in which a woman dies after a Hippo is shot (a case he cited at the R.G.S. the other night and that the R.G.S. were immensely delighted with), was not a case of "Totemism." The horrid white man who shot the Hippo and who had to pay damages to the husband of the lady, had shot the lady's Bush soul, not her remote ancestor. But I have wearied you enough.

I sincerely hope you are better and will still take care and avoid Bicycles. A gentleman yesterday was thrown from one on to a heap of granite in this road and damaged. This I give as another deterrent case. I shall collect them and retail them to all the people I do not want killed.

Three months later she was in full revolt against literary censorship, and her expressions of it to Macmillan were not all so guarded as they are in the letter she wrote to be sent on—surely as disarming an ultimatum as ever was composed:—

20.8.96.

DEAR DR. GUILLEMARD,

I would rather, as the ancient ballad would say, not have a silver pound than be engaged in the state of affairs I at present am, because it is all my fault, and I know it, and I beg you will judge me as lightly as you can and pass any sentence you like on me, save ingratitude for the help you have given me; but the palaver is thus. I went down to Mr. Macmillan this afternoon in re maps, and he said he had a bit of proof from you with observa-

tions on to Miss K. So I said, "Let me have it before it goes to the printers," and he did. I have carefully gone through it, three or four times, knowing I am not clear in the head because of Mrs. Harrison's my cousin's worries having got in there and mixed up with my own, but I clearly see that that book has not got in it enough original literary merit for you to work on. Your corrections stand on stilts out of the swamps and give a very quaint but patchy aspect to the affair, so that I do not know my way about it at all.

I never meant you to take this detail labour over the thing, but only to arrange it and tell me point-blank if I was lying about scientific subjects. I would rather have the rest of the stuff published as it stands. I have no literary character to lose at present and no ambition to gain one.

All this friction hurt her, and she poured out her depressed soul to Lady MacDonald, who was now with her husband in Pekin.

100 Addison Road,  
Kensington, London, W.

My DEAR LADY MACDONALD,

A thousand thanks for your letter of May 30th which I received last night. It has done me a world of good, for to tell you the truth I am low in mind, principally from being low in my health with everlasting colds and headaches but also from having sort of lost the power of enjoying life in England—and it wearies one, which, Lady MacDonald, allow me to inform you is the deuce—and your letter woke me up again in a world where people do things—and have to be careful what they say. I doubt whether there is any really habitable society except that made up of people who you are afraid of and who are afraid of you, with one or two boon companions thrown in for home use: these melancholy reflections are the outcomes of an intensive series of observations on society here during the past 6 months and are given to you in hope of reconciling you to Pekin Society. I have been watching the game here, just as I watch in Africa, as an outsider—and it is not half so good a game to watch. I was yesterday at two At Homes and a dinner, at every one of which I saw people who had abused their hosts up hill and down dale or who their hosts had abused ditto. Yet there they were all together smiling and calling each other by their Christian names and so on—it all seems to me silly and sinful and it's uncommon dull—so

reconcile yourself to life in a temple, but don't go and catch any strange religion.

I have read your description of Chinese Life with great interest—it brings the whole thing up before one better than any book does. I never realised the Chinese were such utter swine—people go and give one a sort of idea that all Chinese and Japanese folk always go about with embroidered robes of great beauty and of silk material, gazing at a lotus-flower and carrying paper umbrellas, and here you come and say right out they are disgusting—you who have experienced the African savages. I am really beginning to think that the traveller—properly so called—the person who writes a book and get his F.R.G.S., &c., is a peculiar sort of animal only capable of seeing a certain set of things and always seeing them the same way, and you and me are not of this species somehow. What are we to call ourselves? I have been wading through many volumes of travel lately, among them Mr. Robinson's; he went to Okano, c.o. the R.N.C., this side up, fragile keep dry and all that sort of thing, you know. Well! save for the names of the places, he might as far as local colour goes have gone to Korea or Cumberland; and another man has brought out a book as big as a feather bed on Somaliland much the same sort of thing. Still I do not reproach them but sympathise with them, deeply, now I have had a turn at writing an African book myself, and I have come to the decision that it is the greatest mistake to write a book about a place you have been to. It's much better to do it like Sir — or —, for personal experiences get in your way sadly. The amount of expurgation my journals have required has been awful. My well-known veneration for Governors, Consul-Generals and Bishops has necessitated much crossing out; for example, I have had to entirely eliminate a lovely scene in the Ogowé, when I and the captain of a vessel had to take to the saloon table because a Bishop with a long red beard and voluminous white flannel petticoats was rolling about the floor in close but warful embrace with the Governor of the Ogowé, utterly deaf to the messages of peace the Captain and I poured down on them; and I have just finished the Rembwé section with much care, for I consorted while on that forsaken River with bold bad black traders—and we, that is to say I and one of these wildfowl, when coming down the River together used to stay every night at a village and have “chatty” little times owing to my black companions, as H. M. Stanley calls them, going in heavily for rum. This did not make him rude to me; far from it, he became what Sir Claude would call weirdly reverential,

and he used to pray to me as to an idol. Yet I own with all my belief in the inferiority of all blacks to all whites, I never felt that utter scorn and disgust for these men that I feel now for a very white American journalist who is doing London for a big New York paper, and who coram publico says the most scandalous things about his own countrywomen who are married to Englishmen over here—they may be true or they may not; that's nothing to do with the case; he has no right to say them, nor other people to listen to him and laugh.

I am not printing anything about Calabar, save my indebtedness to it. You will have the first copy of the book that comes out, and I only pray you may forgive its errors and find nothing in it that may give offence. I have two more articles I shall send you next week. I shall not forward you the various papers on the working out of my collections; but although I am proud enough of them—from the quantities of new species and even genera—I am very wild with the B.M. for one thing, and that is that all the things, except the fishes, I sent up from Calabar, they took possession of and used them for filling up gaps in their collection and so cannot now give me lists; which little game of theirs spoils for me all my insect work in Calabar, and I shall not stay in Calabar again now you are not there—but I daresay I shall be able to do the work for the region over again in the Niger. You may have wondered how it is you have been let off Charles for so long, but that is because he is home. I had three weeks ago a telegram from him from Plymouth "Meet me at Albert Dock with money." I did and unshipped him sound and in good order—indeed, he's better than I have ever seen him. He is talking of returning to Upper Burmah and Java soon—but his 'soon' is the *logo* of the Portuguese; but when he does go, I shall go off to the Niger, not before. He is fascinated with Upper Burmah. Got up some distance beyond Mandalay and is now intent on going there again and across to Cambodia—after the influence of the Hindoo invasion on Art in those regions. . . .

It has been a very bad season on the Coast, I daresay you may have heard of the death by drowning, of poor T. Hoyland, who was once one of Sir Claude's palm-oil lambs in Calabar and an old friend of mine, also the Head agents in Bonny of the Association and Milner brothers and John Pinnock have all pegged out with fever. Mr. Batty, my stammering friend at Cape Coast who you may remember we dined with at the Kemps, has been down with fever but is up again—but during the month buried one assistant and sent four to the Islands. The purser, Charles Sweeney,

who has been on the Coast some twenty years, died last week of fever at Liverpool. Poor genial Irishman, he was spared his great horror—dying on the Coast, he used to say, “a nice thing for a decent Irish gentleman to come up on the day of judgment in the middle of a crowd of beastly blacks.” He was a most finicking and particular man in all the little requirements of life. But I was forgetting fever was a forbidden subject. Thanks be you are out of it. Charles —— is going strong and so is Mr. ——. You remember his saying ta-ta to you? They have appointed me, without my leave and without a salary, their agent in London—and the situation is not a sinecure. . . .

I congratulate you on that typewriter performance: it is beautiful, but did it break down and make you finish in script? I have, as you may observe, not taken to one—but I suffer from one much. Macmillan has all my MSS. typewritten in mercy to the Gentleman who is revising it, and strange to say that the typewriter finds some difficulty in reading my handwriting (I think *you* have observed something of the kind yourself?), and produces some strange effects in the work. Yesterday I was knocked endways by reading in the proof—“A careful young man does not buy a ballet-girl for a wife.” Now I knew I had never uttered this great truth. Besides, the most reckless young Central African blade could not buy a ballet-girl with india-rubber. On referring to the original text I find I had written ‘Baby.’ . . .

With kindest regards to Sir Claude MacDonald,

Ever yours affectionately,

MARY H. KINGSLEY.

But there was no lack of encouragement, especially from the quarter where it cheered her most to be praised. She wrote in August to Macmillan:—

I have had an amusing letter from Liverpool asking for the name of the publisher because an enthusiastic shipowner wants to buy 120 copies to plant in all his ships, and has been inquiring of his local bookseller in vain. I have not quenched this spark of good intention, but banked his fires, as the first engineer would say.

This enthusiast was Mr. (later Sir) A. L. Jones, a very great magnate.

Liverpool, as has been seen, was helping with the details on trade, and she writes to explain that Liverpool



was not to blame for delay, but a cause which she mentions with conscious pride:—

I will send you the rest of the trade appendix soon, but I have been appointed assessor in a trade case on the Ogowé as to the local value of goods taken over in a store from a gentleman since deceased, in particular relating to two hogsheads of trade tobacco, short in the leaf.

Nothing stimulated her so much as the recognition by initiates. One of the few other English persons who had been on the Ogowé was Mr. Bruce Walker, an occasional writer on native matters. He had been sceptical as to Miss Kingsley's travels. Now, she wrote, he had found "I really did cross from the Ogowé to the Rembwé, and also, a thing I have not mentioned, that I was on the Upper Ouronogou."

He wanted to review her in the *Athenæum* when the book appeared. "He was the man," she wrote, "who killed du Chaillu when his book came out; but for myself I had rather be tommyhawked by Bruce Walker than flattered by an ordinary reviewer who does not know the country."

Those who knew the country, as represented in Liverpool, did not stint their praise when the book was about to appear. She wrote on December 22, 1896: "I will now, as it is the festive season, dissipate and give way to pride and send you the 'Shipping Gazette' which was sent me this morning. Approval from Liverpool trade circles is more to me than a whole page of *The Times*."

There was, however, a verdict even more venerated than Liverpool's, and in December George Macmillan sent her to pay obeisance to her "great ju ju," whom she had already met with in Yorkshire.

*Addison Road.*

. . . Ill though I was, I had a charming day with the Tylors at Oxford on Saturday for which I beg to thank you. He is a wonderful cross-examiner, never gives you a hint as to what he

wants said, but is openly jubilant when he gets a fact that agrees with him. His despair about my distinction of the grave and fetish hut affair was tragic for a time, until he recognised that the real underlying idea was a thing he wanted for something else. He showed me the enormous amount of research he had made to get these things as they stood to fit into his knowledge of allied matters, and the splendid honesty of the man in still seeing there was a gap in the idea was a grand lesson to me. Ninety-seven per cent. of the ethnologists either would not have seen the gap or would have bent facts to fix it up, but neither Tylor nor Koelm of Berlin do this thing.

His new great book on *Animism* ought to be even greater than *Primitive Culture*, and in Mrs. Tylor's opinion "it's high time he left off worrying about Noah's ark and wrote it."

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE RECEPTION OF HER TRAVELS

A SUCCESSFUL first book is an event in anyone's life, but in Mary Kingsley's case it altered the whole shape of her existence. It made her a public personage and a champion of causes—certainly not for her happiness. She knew of course that she was challenging controversy, but had no idea of its developments. For the moment, however, success was exhilarating, and within little more than a fortnight she could write to her publisher that she was "surprised at the book's having gone so well already." What mattered more to her, she could say :

My public are satisfied—Liverpool and Günther. Liverpool telegraphed yesterday enthusiastically, and again to-day practically for six copies. Telegram enclosed. . . . I cannot resist sending you my greatest review, *i.e.* Günther. He would not go out of the way to say the thing he did not think, to oblige a new reptile. He never reads newspapers. He was staggered the other day when he was told that I wrote well and shook his head. "A very careful and well-trained observer but—"

Forgive me, but you know I am going to lecture to the Jews on trade, so am capable of anything.

Again, later, but undated :—

Thank you very much for your letter and the cheque. Of course I am glad to have the cheque in an outside sort of way, but it will give me no pleasure if the Firm don't clear expenses. I have felt just like a conscientious prize-fighter who knew he had got money of other people's on him, which if he failed he would lose. It's not the first time I have had this unpleasant experience. I once knew life would be a blank if I could not save 600 cases of gin—but I feel grateful to you and recognise you knew the public better than I. I thought they really cared

for nothing but art and geographical facts, though I have had a sneaking feeling that there must be some people who care for things as they are, with all the go and glory and beauty in them as well as the mechanism and the microbes. Thank you for the *Daily Chronicle*. That ought to sell old iron, but the *Daily News* is quite touching. I could fall upon its neck *à la* Father Galektion because it sees right through the grammar and flippancy that I love my Erdgeist and know him. All those things the *D.N.* loves I nearly cut out. Guillemard never touched or commented on them, and I knew and know how weak and poor they are to the things they struggle to describe.

One of her letters gives an account of her interview with a literary agent who set out the usual considerations, and when he was told that she left herself in her publisher's hands, informed her that she was "precious soft." But, as she added in her letter, "I know who I eat fou fou with before I cat it." Not the least Utopian trait in these relations with the firm is that she assumed them to have detailed familiarity with her book, and therefore to understand her language.—Fou fou is a kind of native "chop" which lends itself to the introduction of poison.

Meantime, there were reminders of the Coast. On February 15, 1897, she writes:—

My girl informs me such a big black gentleman called when I was out. Did you send him on?

Or, in more detail, we have this (undated):—

. . . I have had a man here the whole afternoon talking about how Adam Ekpensions has been behaving to Coco Bassa which, as I knew Enuna-Munannscheng well and had only last mail a totally different account of the affair from Owoo, has been most interesting but rather confusing, and the only thing that we have both got quite clear on is that Squeeze Banigo is at the bottom of it and that Right Bank God Almighty Williams *should never* have been encouraged like that.

Yours very truly and tired,

M. H. KINGSLEY.

A postscript calls attention to a misprint, and adds:—

"I have only now looked at this Rembwé chapter, because I have a letter from a most unreliable literary authority stating 'that it bangs Shakespeare.'" On March 27, after recounting various encouraging symptoms, she ends, "But, Lordy, I've enough rows on. Mary Slessor asking me to bring a pair of twins before Lord Salisbury came by the same post as yours."

The 'rows' were a tether, holding her. "If I had enough courage or individuality to be a coward, I should sail by the boat that leaves Liverpool on the 12th of this month," she wrote at the beginning of April. But already she was committed to deal with the rows by fuller exposition of her doctrines or heresies. A new book was projected, and on April 24, she says: "I will promise to be as serious as I can and try not to be diffuse. I have got an awful lot on my mind about the proper way to grow yams, etc., but I will battle with my desire 'to tell the general public what they take for tea,' in Central Africa, as a very popular song in the Bights, by that harum-scarum Miss Kingsley, says."

One must begin now at least to adumbrate some of the rows which were in progress, and indeed were maintained, while the new book was in writing. The least contentious were with the persons interested in fetish, most of whom rapidly became her personal friends—especially the most eminent. On March 15 she writes to George Macmillan:—

Sir Somebody Lyall is going to write an article on the Fetish chapters for the *Edinburgh Review*. Mrs. Stanley told me, and I have to-night orders to dine with H. M. Stanley to meet him. I would rather have met him at Mrs. Green's, because Mrs. Green has a sort of intelligence and ability to deal with such people that I catch from her like measles.

Many of those who met Mary Kingsley after she became a celebrity met her at the house in Kensington Square where Mrs. J. R. Green was then established. I do not know how the friendship came to grow up

between these two women, who had little in common except ability, but it was close and lasting; though unhappily none of the letters which passed between them are preserved. And I cannot be sure whether it was at Mrs. Green's house or at Mary Kingsley's own that I used to see Sir Alfred Lyall, a silent figure, with the dignity of a great chief about him. It is quite natural that all her letters to him should be signed "yours respectfully." Yet, none the less, they make it clear that since her first meeting she had acquired conscious "ability to deal with" her "big ju ju."

When his review in the *Edinburgh* appeared, it elicited a letter setting out her views so typically that it must be given in full:—

100 Addison Road.

DEAR SIR ALFRED LYALL,

I beg most sincerely to apologise for venturing to write to you on the subject of Fetish—but you are the only person I know of whose opinion on the main points of it are worth having. I am not forgetting Tylor, but Tylor is an Ethnologist, wiser than the rest of his tribe by far, but yet not a philosopher who has been in touch with Eastern thought—and so he is embedded in the middle of his material and not outside it, capable of judging how the thing looks as a whole. I am presuming you are the author of an article on Primitive Religions in the current number of the *Edinburgh* because for one thing I know no one else who would have corralled Max Muller, Jevons and me together, and I also recognise that the writer does not think any of us are up to much, which I am quite certain is the opinion of Sir Alfred Lyall, and one in which I entirely agree. So supposing that you have written that article, I beg to be allowed to thank you for making so many things clear to me that were wrapped in "a cloudy atmosphere," though it is too bad of me to ask you to return to a "state of entangled confusion" when I have no doubt you are simply basking still in the well-ordered philosophic works of Mr. Jevons. I would not be seen dead in the same street with Jevons, but no matter now. It is regarding witchcraft I wish to speak and to ask you if you believe what you say "has been held," that a true distinction exists and can invariably be recognised between religious rites and witchcraft? The West African opinion on this point is quite clear (although I have not made it so to the learned up

here). I think that among the tribes of the Great Forest belt, who have no priests whatever and among whom the witch-doctors are not a class apart, but a function of the house-father, we have got things in a pretty early state. Therefore we will take their view which I spent five solid months, while among them at home, in working at.

You have: (a) A spirit world. (b) A world of spirits in human form, ordinary humanity. (You must never forget that we human beings out there are ourselves a class of spirits.) Class *a* contains good spirits and bad. I know an awfully decent family of spirits who are not gods in the least. They live between Talagouga and Lembarene on the sandbanks, and every night and morning they sing so that canoes can keep from running on the banks, and many is the head of tobacco I have given them, to say nothing of pocket handkerchiefs, and many a time I have taken a canoe after dark and paddled myself up among them so as to listen to the singing sands of Okanda. And then there are in class *a* a bad lot of spirits, perfect swceps. Now in some districts the number of good spirits exceeds that of the bad—the plantations flourish, the river is stiff with fish, the children do not die like flies; in other districts things are otherwise—hence the form of fetish differs, but the conception of this interrelationship between human beings and the spirit world is identical—as is shown by the way the Effek tribe will send to the Ibbibiou for certain forms of spiritual aid, because in the Ibbibiou country there are bad powerful spirits which do certain forms of bad work well. It is, however, quite clear that having in your possession a familiar spirit does not constitute you a witch in Africa as it seems to in Europe, for every man, woman and child has a retinue of spirits. Nor are there a class of spirits the possession of one of which constitutes you a witch. The whole thing depends on the work you, the human being, choose to set your spirit slave to do. One man may get a mionde<sup>1</sup> and use it to keep bush-pig out of his plantations; another may get one and use it to kill his neighbour; but if you once use your mionde to kill your fellow human beings, it sort of becomes a man-eater and must be kept fed. You cannot send your mionde to kill Smith and then get it to look after chickens for the rest of its existence in your service, and you are condemned to be a witch, a danger to society for the rest of your days. Therefore if you are known to have such a spirit in your possession, every bad thing

<sup>1</sup> One of the six classes of spirits, according to Dr. Nassau's grouping; a being who is an agent in causing sickness and either aids or hinders human plans.

that happens in your district is put down to your account, and if it can be done safely you are killed; but some men, bold bad men, openly own to being witches. Such a man was my good friend Duke of Calabar, and such a man is another friend of mine still living who once in a burst of friendship showed me his witch. It was not much to look at, but his face when he looked at it was. Yet no man would have dared touch either of these men. Experience had taught their Houses that they used their respective witches only for the benefit of the House, and if the canoes of other Houses were upset, so much the better; but in the case of men less powerful than these, the fact of having a witch is kept a secret. Yet in some outbreak of passion the owner may let out the fact that he has it. I well remember a grand scene in which a man unable to obtain justice from a council of chiefs for the death of his son rose up and made the witch eyes. Nothing was done to him, but an awe came over the Assembly. I have watched the man for two years now and he is having a respected, if risky, existence, which I have tried to make safer by giving him money to trade with, and only this week I heard from him reporting all was well and his daughters going off to the most influential families in the district—in a most cheering way. The fact of certain people living while they are known to have witches comes out very clearly in Kacong, where there were two kinds of ordeal drink, one for acknowledged witches, who, however, say they have not killed that particular man, and one for people who deny having a witch that will kill anyone. It's just quite like keeping dogs up here, not in itself an irreligious practice, but if you keep a dog that can be proved to have worried sheep or bitten a postman, means are taken by Society to remove the nuisance. I will make a dreadful effort to be clear and sum up: witchcraft in West Africa is man palaver, not god palaver—namely it is a crime and not a sin.

Even in regions where there is an organised priesthood, as among the Ewe, T'shwi and Ogi, the priests have merely a professional jealousy against owners of witches; they may use roundabout ways to get rid of them, because they spoil prices for charms, but to imagine Tando or old Bokowissi or that sad dog Egba quarrelling with Sasabonsum on account of anything he may choose to give human beings!—Well, I want that cabman of yours, please.

As for the God and Ghost distinction, I do mean it; but shall not weary you further on this point, and believe me I am very grateful to you for having given so much time to the con-



sideration of what I know better than anyone else is a very rough untidy bit of work, badly written.

I beg to remain yours respectfully,  
M. H. KINGSLEY,

29.7.97

He replied (so she told George Macmillan) saying he wanted to study witchcraft by the "strange new light" thrown on it in the Fetish chapters, and asking her to read his article on witchcraft in his *Asiatic Studies*. She made answer (after compliments):—

I really do "suffer" from my infirmity of being confused, particularly when addressing a big Ju Ju who would understand it all and know what I want if I were only capable of being clear. But I have caught the habit of thinking black. Sometimes I had to do it for my life, but I often did it just for fun, and now I can no longer think white on witchcraft, and from being a gay young materialist, I am at heart little better than a Mahometan.

I have "looked into," as you call it, *Asiatic Studies*, and well I remember the nights I have spent (when sitting up with my brother at Cambridge) trying by the aid of a shared nightlight to get *Asiatic Studies* and Robertson Smith to go hand in hand and in vain, but I will get *Asiatic Studies* again and re-read it. I have long given up reading anything of a serious kind except Spinoza, the Koran and Law books, because I found my weak mind would not stand it and it confused me. Jevons I was forced into reading by Jane Harrison because on one of her pots there were a lot of little souls hanging about an altar in a way that worried her, and she said I should understand what she wanted, and "not go on talking like that," if I would read Jevons; and I would do anything to help Jane, but don't you imagine I want Mr. Jevons' blood. The other day, when I was wasting Prof. Tylor's time, he burst out with the statement "This man must be stopped," and I said, "You cannot stop him, so don't you try. Jevons supplies a want long-felt, like Mrs. Winslow's soothing syrup." It ended in Tylor's saying, "Ah, but it's a grand thing to see these recognised people who would roast us anthropologists with pleasure licking our boots—saying, let us agree." By all means talk to Jevons with a sweet mouth and let the other party take him and trust him, for he is "the sentinel who will sleep in the gateway," and when it is too late they will regret that they ever left an unassailable position for such as his.

The remainder is not relevant to the main contention, but can ill be spared :

I am in the interest of clearness answering your letter in the order it stands, and so I beg most sincerely now to thank you for your most kind invitation, which I would gladly accept forthwith and definitely, but I cannot because of my Brother and a kitchen boiler. The former goes to Devon on Friday and the latter threatens to go to Shiva and take me and my handmaid with it if it is not had out and scraped. I presume you are not interested in kitchen boilers, so I will say no more, save that if I can get that boiler out *and back* before my Brother comes home, I should be delighted to come down and have the pleasure of meeting Lady Lyall and listening to any remarks you may see fit to make on any subject.

Believe me,

Yours respectfully,

3.8.97

M. H. KINGSLEY.

Another letter, undated, reports on her study of his paper (in *Asiatic Studies*) on witchcraft and non-Christian religions.

. . . I own it gives me more pleasure than I have had for months. Here is *you* saying things about Asiatic Witchcraft which no one can get behind, and which fit in with European Witchcraft and with Chinese Witchcraft (of which I have a wide secondhand knowledge via Sir Thomas Wade and Dr. Giles) and which will not fit in with West African. "Oh! if I were a man," as Beatrice says, I'd have a love of a fight with the cabinet comparative ethnologist—and supported by your statement, and backed up by Ellis's Polynesian researches and old Schoolcraft on Red Indians, I would break a lance with Noah's ark. I mean the "Homogeneity of the Human Race." It often strikes me as quaint, when reading Mr. Kean's works and those of the fashionable school of Ethnologists, how very orthodox they unintentionally are. Half of them seem to have been so recently turned out of Eden that they do not know this wicked world, and the other half seem to be set on trying to get all the animals into the ark, which is an institution I abhor as much as Mrs. Tylor, who says to her professor "Bother Noah's ark. Do get on with your Gifford Lectures." But he will not listen to her, and keeps on hankering to break that ark up. Meanwhile Jevons and Co. are caulking and breaming it with the assistance of Frazer, and

the whole affair is highly irritating to a high and dry Darwinist like me who cannot help believing that as man came up via the anthropoid apes, he already knew several things even before he knew how to make fire and walk upright on his hind legs. I have been extremely interested in your description of Brahminism. It is so much the same sort of thing as Fetish, and it seems strange that these two great forms of religion should be the property of lower races because they in their essence present so much less difficulty to the ordinary common-sense mind than Christianity, Mahometanism or Buddhism. I have always felt that our business men, if they had been left to themselves to make a religion, would have turned out something uncommonly like Juju.

Another letter (dated this time, 14.10.97) refers to what she calls elsewhere her "ethnological embarrassments"—lamenting that she cannot relate them. "Mrs. Green can," she adds, "only alas! she will persist in seeing the fun of Sydney Hartland, me, and the improper songs, etc."

This time it was a question of twins, which she had previously been discussing with him. Native belief always held that their origin was scandalous, and was detailed on the point:

This morning I have been going through a lot of stuff sent me up last week from a black trader in the twin-killing district, and from a Benga native bible-reader. These two men tell me the same thing that "the intoxicated source of information" did. He was a true negro, a Vryman of Cape Mount on the Pepper Coast; therefore the idea holds good for over 2000 miles and both amongst Negro and Bantu, so there may be something in it. I can't publish it, no more than I can publish a lot of things I know, vital as they are to the understanding of things I do publish. It amounts to this—One of the functions of the process of initiation to the secret society of a tribe, both the male and female secret society, is the assignment to each initiated member of a spirit companion—not a spirit slave, but he gets spirit slaves in other ways—so we'll *lef' 'em*. Well, a child of a man, you see, is also a child of his spirit companion, that is to say it is one part human and one part spirit. Now you see if it turns up as twins, the human has been encroaching on the spirit companion's rights—it is a sort of severe adultery. I am afraid I am not being clear, but you may understand the sort of thing. You may say, "Well then if each person has born with

them a spirit companion, why do they want another given them in the initiative process?" Well, that is this way. The spirit companion that is born with them leaves them, for reasons I will not enter into, at puberty—and that's why. I well remember a decisive row that was raging and is still raging at Calabar, in the girls' schools, with the missionary. The girls there are attired in their native beauty and a long narrow strip of cloth, one part of which is wound round the regions those misguided heathens think is their waist, the other part trails down on to the ground, so that the girls' guardian spirits can hold on to it, which is reasonable enough. When in her own home she tucks this tail up, but when outside, she lets it down. That is to say, if she's a well-conducted young person; and if she were to fail to do this and to go walking into market with the tail tucked up, a censorious world would say things, and any of her relations meeting her would spank her like anything, and say some more. Well, these missionaries did not know or care to know the reason of this practice, *but* they did recognise that going about with a trailing tail was a "heathen practice," and they ordered *no* girl going to their school was as much as to have a tail on them, curled or trailing, and the war between native respectability and Presbyterian respectability is a very ravishing spectacle for the unregenerate.

Yours respectfully,

M. H. KINGSLEY.

14.10.97.

Finally, there is this conclusion to a letter appealing for his help to solace a bereaved lady who had "got mixed up with a lot of spiritualistic mediums; it's a bad ju ju for mind and purse, and I did my best to save her."

Oh, dear, why will people who don't *believe* in God let go the end of the string of orthodoxy? I can let go safely because I do;—but nevertheless it half kills me to be confronted with a mass of statements founded on the conception that this world is an eject—"abandoned by God," just as if it were one of his old chimney-pot hats, I suppose; that "matter" (the *Flesh*, *they* call it), "is vile," just as if *They* knew what matter was, and I cannot say what I think or explain what I mean by what I do say, because I could not do it without hurting them. You can rise superior to this and soothe and help that sweet and tortured lady.

I hope I did not weary Lady Lyall to-day by staying too long. I have been keeping away from her for a few weeks, fearing I

might weary her by coming too often. A selfish thing of mine to come at all, but she is so restful and so pleasant to me whose home is in the valley of the shadow of death. I thought when I left Cambridge I had left that valley, but it was an error. It is evidently my home and I must reconcile myself to it, build my shimbec there and settle down, but it does me good to come out of it into Lady Lyall's sunshine. I need barely remark your majesty need not bother your head over my ju ju. Now you have graciously permitted me to have a little Bethel of my own in W.A., I am happy and intend to have Great Times and drive out Devils, vegetable spirits and totemism and deified ancestors. Other little Bethels may harbour these wild fowl if it please them—in my connection we are going to be concrete, dot and carry one all the time. "No sky-larking mysticism admitted," we nail as a note on our humble door. Wherefrom it seems to me Herodotus's division of the human race in male and female nations has been abandoned prematurely, just like some people would abandon Chartered Companies prematurely. I feel the difference when I read or hear you. I am a firm African. The African is a female nation. We dislike Mrs. So and So because of her bonnet. You take this as an airy flight of fancy—it ain't. We work to our conclusion, dot and carry one. We are quite right, but we cannot do the things you can, or think the thoughts you think, and occasionally *we* know this, as in the case of

Yours respectfully,

22.5.98.

M. H. KINGSLEY.

On reading through this, I think it necessary to remark no extra charge is made for grammar.

All these scraps of chaff had their significance—*φωνάεντα ουνοῖσιν*—when she wrote to a trained thinker. But for the general public she had to explain the relation of her studies to practical life and its bearing on action.

The essential thing when you try to understand any Western African native institution is the religion of the native, for this religion has so firm a grasp upon his mind that it influences everything he does. It is not a thing apart as the religion of the European is at times. The African cannot say "Oh, that's all right from a religious point of view, but one must be practical." To be practical, to get on in the world, to live the day and night through,

he must be on working terms with the great world of spirits round him.<sup>1</sup>

England was bound, she held, to study the African's religion, "so that by this knowledge we may be enabled to rule them wisely, to give them chances of advancing that are chances they can avail themselves of, and thereby save thousands of lives, both black and white, by means of that true knowledge which I regard as the inward aid of God."

So she wrote in the *National Review* for September 1897, when her second book was in progress, and when she found herself more and more constrained to lay aside the bantering tone and use the noble gravity which well became her. I do not think that in any earlier writing of hers there could be found outspoken recognition of God and the aid of God. Her letter to Sir Alfred Lyall speaks of her belief in God; yet we must see further on what she meant by this.<sup>2</sup>

But a couple of less grave matters must first be disposed of. An editor of her letters is bound to sympathise with her own difficulties in handling her material: there are so many things one wants to put in and they are so miscellaneous. Here now is the opening of the letter which ended about twins:—

DEAR SIR ALFRED LYALL,

If I live to be 101 I shall not forget the pleasure you gave me by saying that you supposed I did not *like* being suspected of shooting things. I cannot, and I see I need not attempt to, explain my feelings on the matter to you, therefore it is only left me to show gratitude, which I do by lending you *Many Cargoes*.<sup>3</sup> It is a noble and improving work. It is not Hamlet, Macbeth nor Lear—a seething battle-ground of the great emotions which one can pleasantly wade about among for one's whole life-long, but such emotions as it has are in a singularly healthy state for this 19th century, and I will always remember the mate's advice in *In Borrowed Plumes* and not "encourage 'im; love at

<sup>1</sup> *National Review*, September, 1897.

<sup>2</sup> *Infra*, p. 193 sqq.

<sup>3</sup> The first book of short stories published by W. W. Jacobs.

first-sight ain't worth having." And as you seem to have dimly heard of D.T., or as we call them, the jimjams, may I recommend the study of *A Case of Desertion*? It is from a scientific point of view masterly. The irritation passing into a sense of great personal rectitude coupled with an insight into the injustice and cruelty of the surrounding world is perfect; the patient always does something desperate after this. Also the beautiful belief in the benefit of hitting a man over the head held by the captain is universal to the superior sex.

I may hitch on to that another literary enthusiasm. Writing to Macmillan, she had mentioned Hugh Clifford, whose work she recommended for *Macmillan's Magazine*. "But *the* man is Conrad. I went down before him the first thing of his I ever read, and the way he keeps on improving is splendid. That thing of his *Karain: a Memory* in November *Blackwood* is splendid and the *Nigger of the Narcissus* also; there is nothing like us sailormen for literature!"

"Us sailormen!"—She always claimed the sea till it claimed her.—She had no reluctance to die; but if she had known that she must miss seeing a novel by Conrad devoted to her Africa, she would have been less ready to go.

In the account of her "rows" there should be included one with the formidable Mr. Bruce Walker, who had been on the Ogowé and (in her opinion) did not like the idea of any other English person sharing this distinction. Mary Kingsley's quarrel with his review was of an odd kind. I have been unable to find a word in it that is not laudatory, though it covered ten columns of the *Athenæum*. But the second and third sentences ran as follows:—

She is undoubtedly the first of her sex who has dared to face the manifold dangers of the pestilential regions of the French Congo and other parts of barbarous Western Equatorial Africa; for missionary women and the wives of officials and traders seldom go far from their comfortable homes or run any unnecessary and abnormal risks, and certainly never went canocing for pleasure or

in the interest of science. Indeed scarcely any other lady would be capable of doing what Miss Kingsley has accomplished and relates in so jaunty a style.

He probably thought this would please her; instead of that, she up and at him.

"Owing to the morbid state of opinion regarding woman's work," she wrote, "the time was unpleasant for any student who happens to be a woman to come before the public. . . . As my visiting West Africa has brought down on the ladies these disparaging remarks of your reviewer, I must combat his statements and assure you that the wives of the officials and missionaries and traders who are resident there, not for their own pleasure or instruction, but for the noble motive of duty to their husbands, do not lead an easier or safer life than I do in the bush. It is far more dangerous to health in West Africa to remain in one place, however comfortable the surrounding conditions may be there; and when the resident is the wife of a missionary at such places as Lembarene or Talagouga, with little children of her own to see to, domestic affairs to carry on with only the aid of natives quite unused to white culture, and the moral and physical strain constantly on her of a large school of native girls, she has an infinitely harder time and task than I ever had in the most remote regions of Africa my studies have ever compelled me to live in; and I should be ashamed to grumble over my inconveniences and worries when away from a white station in the face of my knowledge of the cheerful and helpful way Madame Jacot, Miss Mary Slessor and Madame Forget deal with their surrounding circumstances, or in the face of the equally creditable behaviour under difficulties of hundreds of women who have never left England in their lives."

That is Mary Kingsley all over. She was against votes for women, but she was always the champion of her sex. I believe that the last sentence was written with the thought in her mind of one of her heroines—"an Irish charwoman who drank, who would have done the whole week's work of an African village in an afternoon and then been quite fresh enough to knock some of the nonsense out of her husband's head with that of her broom."

It seems relevant to produce my evidence for her views on the suffrage question. This is found in a letter



to Sir Matthew Nathan, written just before she sailed for South Africa in 1900 :

I have been opposing women having the parliamentary vote this afternoon, and have had a grand time of it, and have been called an idealist and had poetry slung at me in chunks. Argument was impossible, so I offered to fight the secretary in the back yard, but she would not. So you can all write me down impracticable.

Her controversy over missions need not be revived in detail; but letters to her friend Mr. Kemp bear on it, and on her whole outlook. He had written after reading the *Travels* that apart from the personal kindness to his own Wesleyan Mission, the Methodists were hurt—all the more because they thought Charles Kingsley had been unfair to them. She answered, after some preliminary chaff:—

Seriously though, I am very sorry I have written a word that has given pain to any Methodist missionary. I do not seem to have injured the feelings of the French Protestants, with whom I live at great peace. I am not in such a sweet state of remorse regarding the C.M.S. or the Presbyterians. But you know enough of the world and the West Coast to know the wholesale indiscriminate abuse showered on missionaries, and you know the class I associate with on the Coast—traders and sea-captains. In the interests of peace, or, if you like it, idleness—for I take no pleasure in hearing people abuse each other—I have studiously avoided alike Government officials and missionaries; because if I associated with them they said things about traders, and if I associated with the latter they retaliated. With the traders it was necessary for my work I should be in touch—not on your coast, where I do not pretend to work either at fish or fetish—but on my S.W. coast, which is far less civilised, and where there are many places with no missions of any sort or description, and the only white is the trader. By knowing the trader I have got to like him, and by the exercise of common sense I have been able to see the good in the missionary. But please remember I have had to find this out more gradually, for I have always been surrounded by people who did not approve of missions; and at the same time it was impossible for me to ignore the truth of what was said against the missionaries for their destroying the honesty and morality of the

native; for when among bush tribes like those Fans and Ajumbas I found both honesty and morality and truthfulness; but down in Victoria and Amba Bay—save for good dear old Mr. Wilson, the black Baptist missionary—these qualities were discernible mainly by their absence, and on Fernando Po among those Portos things were worse. But I had reason to believe that these hymn-singing, canting scoundrels that brought such denunciations down on missionaries were the outcasts from the missionary societies of the Gold Coast and Sierra Leone. So I do not publish facts about them of a sensational nature just to amuse the non-missionary loving public in England; all I tried to do was to prove that the African was not a bad sort of man, not an habitual drunkard, not a childish fool, and that the failure of missionaries in dealing with him—and it is a failure, when one thinks of the lives and money spent on it—arose from error in method of teaching, want of industrial training, want of knowledge of the sort of man they had to deal with; and that to put this failure down to other causes such as drink traffic, and polygamy, etc., was drawing the red herring across the trail, and tended to the perpetuation of error, which means more waste of life and money.

I am sorry Uncle Charles said those things about Methodists;<sup>1</sup> for you don't forget them, and you seem to think that sort of feeling runs in the family. If you only knew our family, you would know that it is pretty nearly certain that if one member of it thinks one thing, another won't agree with him, and I have now before me a letter from an irritated Churchman saying it is most regrettable that a daughter (which means me) should show such bias in favour of Nonconformist missions. But I will bother you no more; I have said nothing further on missions. I think I have a right to an opinion, for I have been twice to West Africa. You saw me on my second trip out, after which I went far into the interior of the most dangerous part of all Africa, and I know the native well enough to be able to manage him—with no white assistance, either educational or personal; and I feel I should be a perfect snob if I did not speak out and say that he is not a bad sort of man.

His reply was that he wanted to talk instead of writing,

<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that she once told Mr. Kemp that she had never read any of her uncle's novels. There is an allusion to *Two Years Ago* in her memoir of her father, as has been remarked above. But I have come on no other trace of any familiarity with the large family output in fiction. She was, indeed, generally speaking no novel-reader. Dickens, Stevenson, Conrad and Jacobs indicate the exceptions to this rule. It is always Kipling's verse that she alludes to.

and so she bade him to her flat at 100 Addison Road, near to Uxbridge Road station. "I mention this," she writes, "in case you do not know the district, which is intricate, and several valuable West Coasters have been lost on their way here."

She did not mention that the little flat where she and her brother lived "in a state of primitive culture" was at the top of a big stone stair and could be identified by a peculiar odour which met the ascending and accompanied the departing guest. It proceeded from a singularly hideous and stumpy image whose neck was coated with a reddish-brown substance and whose skull was studded with rusty nails. The colouring matter was dried blood and the nails were votive, each having been driven in at the request of one of the faithful who desired the death of another. These offerings were paid for, and, as Mary Kingsley said, in the interests of business the ju ju man was obliged to show a percentage of results.

Mr. Kemp went, talked for four hours, came back next day and talked for two more, and went away with the advice to make his own case by writing a book of his own and with an offer of an introduction to the Macmillans—which resulted in the publication of his volume.

There was also exchange of photographs and then comes this notable letter:—

I am really much obliged to you both for caring to have that photograph. I am really a very melancholy person inside. But I don't show that part of myself. I feel I have no right to anyone's sympathy, and I have so much more than I deserve of what is worth having in this life; and, moreover, far under the melancholy there is an utter faith in God, which I fear I could not make you believe I have. Nevertheless it is there, and it has survived my being educated among agnostics, and the dreadful gloom of all my life until I went to Africa; but it has grown so strong now that I never question the truth of it. I never feel the need I see my fellow scientifics feel of proving it by some human means, such as spiritualism—or of giving it up and handing the affair over to Rome. I do not mean that my faith is of any use except to the owner, or that it is comfortable and restful; for I have always a feeling of

responsibility. All through the fifteen years during which I nursed my mother and watched over my brother's delicate health, I never felt "it was all for the best," but only that perhaps I could make things better for them—if only I knew how, or were more able; and I tried my best, and I know I failed, for my mother's sufferings were terrible, and my brother's health is now far from what I should wish. So you see I have too gloomy a religion to want to convert other people to it. For I think, when I hear an unbeliever holding forth on the "ridiculousness of Christianity," or "the idea of a Great Good God," "Ah! you fool, you'll know better some day, and if you don't it doesn't much matter"; and when I hear the Christian, I cannot believe *that*, but I wish I could—when I am lazy. I know you'll rise up at this; but I only mean to say that if I had a dogmatic Christian faith I should be lazy. Meanwhile I can only feel that I know and see the

God of the Lily and the Rose,  
Soul of the granite and the bee;  
The mighty tide of Being flows  
In countless ages, Lord, from Thee.  
It springs to life in grass and flowers,  
Through every age of being runs,  
And from Creation's mighty towers  
Its glory flames in stars and suns.

Where this verse comes from I do not know; I heard it when I was a child a quarter of a century ago; and it, and the grand passage in Spinoza's *Tractatus Religio Politicus*, are all the sacred books I have. Forgive me for bothering you about this. I never wrote on my religious views before, nor will I again.

P.S.—Oh! I had an invitation to lecture from a Tunbridge Wells Society yesterday, which puts me in mind to say that if you would like me to lecture for any of your Societies I will. They cleared £76 by a lecture I gave—East End charities, on Tuesday.

The postscript is added for its own sake and also because it explains this further note, written on June 22, '97.

I hope you don't think I was intruding my belief on you. I only did so because I thought if I offered to lecture for you at any time, you ought to know. I did not want to have you saying afterwards "If I had known, etc." I have never held forth on the subject before to anyone. Gracious only knows what other people think I am, but I find they have a way of regarding me as

one of them, whether they are Roman Catholics or Mahometans; but that is no affair of mine, as long as I do nothing to deceive them.

The remainder of this correspondence for the next few months is largely concerned with the progress of Mr. Kemp's book, and one passage in it must be quoted. In the manuscript which he had sent her is the story of a blustering person on a West Coast steamer who showed off before a quiet missionary with talk of crocodiles, till the missionary asked him what was the average length of a crocodile's tongue. "Two foot to a yard," was the answer, whereupon the quiet missionary (Mr. Kemp himself) said quietly, "But crocodiles have no tongue." Mary Kingsley comments:—

I am glad you told that man it had not got one, because now you mention him, I remember him, though I have forgotten his name. . . . Anyhow, he was a man who wanted sitting on for the sake of his mental health. But still, between ourselves, crocodiles *have* tongues. They are one of the most marvellous contrivances we find in the animal kingdom. People, not of scientific tribes, however, can open hundreds of crocodiles' mouths and never see the tongue, and the *popular* idea is that they have none, and if the officer had known anything about them he would have known they hadn't got one. Still, the thing is there. It's a large tongue—it is like in a way the tongue of the iguana, incapable of protrusion. He cannot put it out and flick it about like a lizard or a snake. Still, it's there—a large structure and has a hyoid bone in its base in the throat, and this tongue is a lower flap of membrane which goes across the throat. The mechanism of the tongue, the membrane, and the nostrils work together, so that the crocodile can seize anything in his mouth, then sink it below water without any water entering his throat, and just keeping his nostrils above water he can breathe all the time. Don't take the story out, because it and its surroundings give an excellent picture of the form of officer found on the West Coast boats, which is no ornament to them. You might say when he was informed a crocodile had no tongue, by one of us, he collapsed, neither knowing whether it had or hadn't. Which was the true state, and I daresay he had never seen one in his life. You don't see them even in the rivers from steamers except on very rare occasions. I have heard the only place you see them from steamers is the

Congo, where they are very bold and dangerous; then you only see them on sandbanks far off, or hear or smell them in the reed bank at Boma. I am amused, and own to the truth of your description of some of the traders on steamboats. Don't interfere with it, as far as steamboats go. For I dare say you are right about the way they persecute missionaries. Still, on the steamboats I have been on where there has been a missionary, he has always had the upper hand. When there have been a band of missionaries they have been tyrants.

What other writer has been equally competent to expound the anatomy of a crocodile and the manners of West Coast steamboats?

A further quotation will illustrate the dealings between this heretic and the missionary whom she respected and admired as a man. Mr. Kemp found occasion to say in his book that the Gold Coast negroes were no more prone to abuse alcohol than Europeans, on the Coast or at home. She cautions him:—

Think over mentioning the liquor question before you do it. Your observations will make for *truth*, but they will land you in war—and in a war you cannot fight so free as I can. Believe me, it will always be a great consolation to me to know that men like you do not think I am altogether wrong. But I will never publish any unprinted and unpublished utterance of a missionary in support of my own views.

Dr. Nassau sent a letter to Bruce Walker about me last mail, which B. W. was going to publish, but I prevented him, because although it would have done me good it would have done the Dr. harm, and I don't want to get any one involved in war on my account.

If she wanted to keep Mr. Kemp out of controversy it was not from undervaluing his help:—

You would blush if you knew how deeply valued you are in Liverpool and here, for your moderation and fairness. But seriously, it is you who save the mission cause to thinking men. From a certain standpoint you are a *trial* because you prevent thinking men from what the Americans would call going bald-headed for missionaries. I cannot say anything against mission-

aries like . . . and . . ., half so cutting or so damaging as I should, did I not know men like you, Dr. Law, Dr. Nassau, Pere Adams and Monseigneur Lesoz, and Lawson Forfeitt, and so you shelter those screaming, those hysterical liars and exaggerators, who turn and rend you like they did at the Duke of Westminster's meeting, because you will not go for the mission subject on emotional lines. I know your religious fervour is as great and greater than theirs, but it is manly. Please do not think I admire, or for the matter of that, that any of the scientific tribe I was brought up amongst, admire what is called broad-minded theology. We don't, we despise the person who tries to reconcile religion and science, by twisting both of them out of shape and meaning.

Her last word on the whole matter will be found in the preface to her *West African Studies*, where she has "the pleasant duty" of remarking that in this book nothing is said regarding missionary questions.

I do not think that it will ever be necessary for me to mention those questions again except to Nonconformist missionaries. I say this advisedly, because, though I have not one word to retract of what I have said, the saying of it has demonstrated to me the fearless honesty and the perfect chivalry in controversy of the Nonconformist missions in England. As they are the most extensively interested in West Africa, if on my next stay out in West Africa I find anything I regard as rather wrong in missionary affairs, I intend to have it out within doors; for I know that the Nonconformists will be clear-headed, and fight fair and stick to the point.

I think that the missionary interest had much to do with people demanding her services as a lecturer—work in which she was busy and prosperous. "The lecture at Highgate was, I believe, a success," she writes to George Macmillan, "for the secretary had a succession of appalling and audible rows with a disappointed public. Wait till I get back to the Coast and tell them my experiences in England."

Some of it, I am sure, was unpaid work, as for instance when she lectured at St. Martin's Town Hall for the Building Fund of the Working-men's College. But in

July she reports that her agents had "booked her for £200 worth of lectures."

It was hard work and not congenial, though, like everything else, it afforded matter for her humour. She wrote to George Macmillan :—

I should dearly like to take photographs of some of my audiences—and chairmen. At that Highbury Quadrant I had 1700 people. I addressed them from a red-velvet lined pulpit surrounded by the ministers and elders. Three times last week I spoke in miscellaneous chapels and had tea with the deacons, grim old budgeroons. Some of them afterwards I think sought to give lectures in Africa on the Ju Ju of the North Sea Islands. I am getting up Baptists thoroughly, and know a general from a particular and a sprinkler from an immersionist at sight. Will you kindly explain why I get on so with Nonconformists and Radicals, and please don't forget to let me know when John Morley is speaking anywhere. Excuse haste, just off to Newbury and Bristol.

If she took the money from people whom she described so unceremoniously, the taking was not all on one side. She told Macmillan in confidence :—

I paid the Mission Evangélique £10 10 [presumably for her board when she stayed with them on the Ogowé], and I subscribe to that mission, but this is another secret, and they refer to me as Dear Sister and have asked me to pay for a water cistern on Talagouga Island. That also will I do, and I have sent the eighteen gallons of extract of pile preservative. So don't go about saying I don't help mission work. I am moreover going next month to help clear off the debt of a Baptist Chapel at Northampton : per contra, I am preaching on the 9th in South Place, and holding forth to a working-men's secularist club at Leicester on the unity of the interests of capital and labour.

Behind all there was the mission of a propagandist working under orders :—

Were it not for A. L. Jones and Goldie, I would rather write stuff for the printer ; but they nag me to interest people in West Africa to serve their own private ends, and insist that a lecture with magic-lantern slides is worth ten magazine articles and half a dozen books.



But she was all the time working for the printer as well. First there was the cheap edition of her *Travels*, for which she had to write a new preface, and decide on what should be omitted.

There are only two things I cannot unsay: what I have said about the Liquor Traffic; and I can't leave out a single damn after that American review.

If people thought her indelicate, they must; she was not prepared to go into a class with another African lady traveller, who, she says, "is commonly reported to have insisted on native chiefs wearing nice bag drawers before they were admitted to her presence."

Some alterations were made concerning the number of people who had ascended the Peak of Cameroon: Roger Casement had to be counted in. She adds:—

I find from Germans that I am not the second but the first to go up Mungo by the way I went. But all this sort of thing I would rather leave out, remembering my friend Mr. Evan Evans, who "was not a man to blow though he had had the smallpox three times," and that makes me so listless about the map. I don't want to assert without giving lats. and longs., that I traversed hundreds of miles in various districts never before traversed by whites. I don't mention half my picnics in the *Travels*.

But the serious labour was her new book, which troubled her with uneasiness both about its manner and its matter. In July she was crying out for someone to read the proofs helpfully. "That is the worst of me. Anyone can criticise my writing, precious few what I write about; if it were the other way it would be easier for me."

She wanted somebody to guard her against errors of temperament. "What I fear now is that the people who 'agree with me about missionaries' will drive me into the arms of the missionary party, and I shall have to learn hymns and go out to the Heathen as a missionary myself for a Nonconformist body."

The work went on amid endless interruptions. She wrote on December 4 to Macmillan :

I do not know how to apologise for not writing sooner to you anent the account you sent me on the 1st, but last week I had an awful time of it in divers ways. I had to lecture for Wesleyan Missions at Tunbridge Wells, and the duly shocked Erdgeist sent down on me a first-class thunder storm during the performance. I had to go and make ju ju with a great ju ju, Frank Swanzy of Sevenoaks, who manifested himself as well disposed, and I had to go to Oxford to do business with the Pitt Rivers Museum, and I had to do all these things to an accompaniment of neuralgia and looking after a Bishop, the Bishop who I told you had "placed himself in my hands." All these things are over now except the neuralgia, and the Bishop has been duly started with a proper hat for himself and his wife, proper medicine supplied by my own patent Doctor, all his heavy luggage shipped free by my patent shipowner, and so on, and I hope he will be a credit to me. So I return to my own affairs which consist as usual in thanking you most sincerely for your great kindness to me in seeing that *T.W.A.* was worth your publishing and in treating me with so great a liberality in it pecuniarily, and so great a toleration of me personally. I honestly feel I ought to be far better for all this than I am and more able to write the next book for you better—but I cannot get outside the seething mass of things. This new book, though it will seem flippant enough and to spare when it is done, is heavy work for me. I am holding on to the main idea, round which it is written, by the scruff of its neck, but the selection of the facts that will bring that idea clearly out to the minds of people who do not know is hard work. If I were a Sir Henry Maine, or if I did not know so much, it would be easier. I have passed all the proof of it so far through Lucy Toulmin-Smith's hands; she is an acknowledged authority on grammar, and I am struck by the way she tolerates mine. She says it is *very good sixteenth century* on the whole, and exactly like a German friend of hers writes English when translating Sanskrit. What can you want more! . . .

Yours very truly, and very tired,

4.10.97.

M. H. KINGSLEY.

How hard she was driven may be gathered from a letter to Mrs. Kemp, written on September 11, and

apologising for not being able to come down that month—two new engagements having arisen.

But gladly will I come on Oct. 2nd for Saturday to Monday. That is about the largest space of time I have for a holiday except Oct. 14th, when I have another two days—up to the end of December.

The result was naturally a breakdown. In January she went to Ireland and caught a virulent influenza, which first attacked her heart ("always my weak spot"), then went to the lungs and produced congestion, ending finally in a mild typhoid. Mr. Kemp, calling on her in London, heard of the illness and reported to George Macmillan, who, she told Mr. Kemp, "came up, saw my doctor, took the idea in his head that I was dying, which that day I very nearly was, and sent for Mrs. Green from Paris." By the end of the month she was writing at length to Mr. Kemp about his book and other subjects. But she had hoped in that month of January to be in West Africa. "If I leave for the Kasamanca before January, as I hope to do, I may ask you for a further allowance," she wrote in mid-September, acknowledging a draft from her publisher.—It was not health that had defeated her projects, but the course of events which made her feel that her duty lay in England.

## CHAPTER IX

### WEST AFRICAN POLITICS

So far I have been dealing with matters on which Mary Kingsley went into controversy with her eyes open, expecting attacks and getting them; though the virtue that was in her, her innate goodwill and justice, took the venom out of the controversy. These were matters to which she attached high importance, yet not for these would she have been turned back from her purpose and desire of returning to West Africa. She had said her say about missionaries, and about the liquor question, and would, I think, have been content to leave it at that. But from the beginning of 1898 onwards new and violent issues arose, fights from which she could not stand aside. Men's lives were at stake, lives of both white and black; but to her thought, a greater thing was in jeopardy—the fair name and the honour of England. She might be alone in her view, or little better than alone, so far as help went; that made no matter, while the fight was on, she would use all her power in it. For she knew by now that her work in exploration, in writing and in speaking had given her a power; when she spoke, she could count on being listened to.

Yet the last thing she desired was to speak controversially. No one I ever knew was so ready to see the best in an opponent, to find points of agreement rather than of difference; it was through this generosity that she earned her influence. If she attacked, it was in defence of others; for instance, her quarrel with the missionaries was not for what they believed, but because in their propaganda they misrepresented both the natives and the traders—her friends.

For she was, in truth, the friendliest of human beings, and the most unassuming. She liked company, she liked to give pleasure, she loved the exchange of ideas; her mind was open in all directions. Sex, indeed, interested her only as an anthropologist; she had no gossip. But on literature and on painting she had real insight, and as to the less general subjects, she could talk to a statistician with the same intimate apprehension and the same zest as to a ship's purser. And in the small coin of friendship, which matters so much, she never ran short; over a spring-cleaning or the rejection of a manuscript, she would pour out her sympathy and her humour. Men and women alike delighted in her, and if she had chosen simply to enjoy her success, there was not a house in London that would not have been enchanted to welcome her, the most entertaining guest and the easiest to entertain. She was a celebrity and an oddity of the most delightful kind, and of the least self-conscious.

Her appearance was entirely in keeping with her steady refusal to risk herself on a bicycle. She might have been dressed up to look the part of a duke's housekeeper; no other rôle fitted with that black silk dress, and that surprising little black headgear. It had a tendency to slip rather far back on her head, which suggested that the duke's housekeeper was being played by a rakish comedian, though in severely restrained style. So apparelled, and looking from six-and-thirty (her real age) to six-and-forty, her aspect was not so much demure as bizarre. But I remember once a big entertainment where all sorts of literary and artistic people were assembled, and suddenly I was asked by an artist, "Who is that?" "Mary Kingsley," I answered. "But you said she was plain! She is the most beautiful person here." For that night, someone, I am sure, had taken her in hand, and so wrought that she moved among us looking like a Dürer Madonna. It was beauty, angular yet full of grace, the head nobly poised on the long neck, the tall body and limbs noble

and dignified in line. Only someone with an artist's feeling could have made her look so, and only an artist's eye would have responded to the appeal. In ordinary life, except when she wore the bonnet, one never thought of her appearance. You can see her with bonnet on (not the fur cap but a bonnet *de cérémonie*) in a good photograph<sup>1</sup> here reproduced as frontispiece; but the medallion on the title page (originally engraved for the *Journal of the African Society*) keeps some suggestion of the Düreresque beauty.

What did hit one at every moment was the incongruity of her speech. Her voice and accent were charming, soft and cultivated; what she said was generally ungrammatical and always slangy—not with the slang of society, but her own selection of choice idioms, collected in the most miscellaneous company, and from the most varied extent of impolite reading. Words amused her, especially bad words. I never heard her use any of the hackneyed verbs, adjectives or nouns by which less inventive people seek to colour their talk; yet her expression was always and in all senses unconventional; and she wrote exactly as she spoke. Slang with her was as natural as with a Texan cowboy, and as picturesque. Yet when her mood demanded she could utter her thought with a noble strength and dignity.

That thought always centred about one idea—the idea of justice. She loved courage: yet this, she always felt, might be only a human weakness, a woman's delight in a brave man; she was prepared to laugh about that, to be slangy about that. But of justice she always spoke with grave lips.

She used her humour, after the English fashion—for she was intensely English—to cloak the seriousness of her purpose; but she was never of those who, like

<sup>1</sup> This photograph was made in 1897, for Mr. Kemp. His copy bears on the face of it her inscription "Yours truly, M. H. Kingsley"; and on the back the description reproduced under this book's frontispiece: "The melancholy picture of one who tried to be just to all parties."

Swift, or in our days Shaw, put their passion of resentment at injustice into a bitter laughter. She was no satirist, she used no irony, and though she hated preaching, she was never shamefaced about speaking out simply and directly those things which she had most at heart. Her humour bubbled over with gaiety; it had the sweetness of gaiety even at its slangiest. She was disorderly in her methods of expression—as disorderly as Lord Fisher, in whose writings she might have recognised the only parallel for her prose style; but the disorder was superficial, it covered trained and disciplined thinking. When she had facts or recorded judgments to refer to, she set them out; if the conclusion, no matter how confident, was merely her own deduction, you would be carefully warned of the fact. “I have no authority to fortify my position with, so it is only me.” But why should I seek to describe what is so much better illustrated by her letters?

All her friendships were with households rather than with individuals, when there was a household to make friends with, as her letters show; but of course those were privileged to see most of her who somehow shared her main preoccupation; and my title to the privilege was that I wrote on West African affairs. Even book knowledge of this subject was not common then, and there were only three journalists following it with any sort of serious study. The best known of these was Miss Flora Shaw, who afterwards became still better known as Lady Lugard. She wrote for *The Times* and was closely in touch with the Colonial Office—not in itself a recommendation to Mary Kingsley, who had warm sympathy and admiration for those who did the work of administration in Africa, but little kindness for “the Bureau.” I also had dealings with the Office, but my interest had begun and continued through my brother, whose first experience of war had been the expedition which led to the Waima affair, and who was from 1896 at the Intelligence Department of the War

Office. Through him, I had become aware of the abounding literature in French, and worked that vein. The third of us was Mr. E. D. Morel, then working for Sir Alfred Jones in Liverpool, and therefore in close touch with the centre of affairs; so well informed that, as a letter shows me, Miss Kingsley believed his review of her second book to have been written by one who had been on the Coast. It was not, however, till early in 1899 that her personal friendship with him began.

But she was well-disposed—more than well-disposed—to anyone who would take a hand in bringing West African affairs into public notice: eager for help and eager to help anyone to help her. Her letters to me, re-read now after a score of years, remind me that on points of detail I very often expressed views which she disagreed with, and, much worse, sometimes attributed to her views which she did not hold. Once I had tried, wrongly, to infer positive support of a certain proposal from her rejection of the only proposed alternative; and she no doubt feared a repetition of this when she wrote to me:—

I heard with cold chills going down my mental back last night, Mrs. Green saying something to you about my opinion on this government of native races. I pray you until you have *in print* that opinion, judge it not—no human being knows yet what it is, for I don't myself. I am trying to formulate it, and formulating a definite opinion is grief and anguish to me, which is the reason I have so few of them, and I would fain be without those I have, for they are no comfort to me. My present state is perfectly set forth in that valuable scientific stanza: "The Centipede was happy quite, until the frog in fun inquired, Which leg goes after which? She upon considering which, worked up her feelings to a pitch that she lay helpless in a ditch, forgetting how to run."

In my attempt to tackle government of Native Races *in re* West Africa, all the holding ground I can find is along the commercial anchorage. I know I shall catch it from the religious and imperial party, and from the educated African. However, I think I have successfully collared the educated African, though he kicks a good deal and says, "Humane feelings are not to be expected from Miss Kingsley."



If the educated African not only said, but thought this—which I doubt—he was much mistaken. The essential virtue in her was the width of human sympathy. Her heart went out unreservedly only to two classes in West Africa, the unsophisticated native and the European trader, both of whom were, as she might have put it, in full harmony with their environments. But she was the only person I ever knew who, loving the bush native, had affection and admiration for many educated Africans; the only person also who, championing the traders, was the devoted friend of many missionaries. She could sympathise, she could be friends with you, though your motives or ideals were to her only intellectually comprehensible. Your limitations, or hers, were no bar to friendship.

Such was the woman: I have now to describe the causes for which she set aside not only pleasure and ease but what she valued more, adventure; discarding even reasonable care of health, spending without an instant's hesitation all she had to give.

The first was general and concerned her only as an Englishwoman who was an Imperialist for West Africa. The international struggle for dominion in regions where European powers had for centuries been content with ports of call and factories on the coast came to its acutest moment in the year 1898.

After the Waima incident, a boundary commission delimited the Franco-British frontier between Sierra Leone and French Guinea. Then the French, pushing down from Senegambia and pushing up from the Ivory Coast (where in 1889 they had only held the port of Assinee), rapidly made Sierra Leone into an enclave, open to the sea, but barred from the hinterland. This enclave, like the Gambia, soon felt the effect of being surrounded by a zone into which no goods of British origin could enter without a heavy tax. There remained, however, two main tracts of British territory whose frontier was open

in the rear—the Gold Coast, and what was then generally called Lagos—the present Southern Nigeria,—with the Royal Niger Company's sphere behind it.

Between these two British bases on the Coast, France had established a new wedge, driving inward to her designed focal centre, Lake Tchad. In 1893 she completed the conquest of Dahomey and resolutely pushed inward, towards the Niger, with a double object. The first of these was to link up Dahomey with the block of country in which Sierra Leone was enclosed, and in so doing to secure as much of the Gold Coast's hinterland as possible, thus reducing the new enclave which would be formed to the narrowest dimensions. This was foreseen, and in 1894, Mr. Ferguson, a skilled engineer but a black man, was sent up to make treaties. The French, however, had expeditions scouring through this region whose officers were little disposed to recognise any claim but that of effective occupation; and they were in full touch with their base in Guinea, while the way of advance from the sea was blocked against England by the Ashanti power. But Mr. Chamberlain was now at the Colonial Office infusing into that department a new energy; for though his mind was not chiefly occupied with Africa in the West, yet his force was felt there. In 1896 an expedition to Coomassie deposed Prempeh bloodlessly and opened the road: thereafter, British parties moved northward into country where similar French expeditions coming from Guinea were already in movement, and the possibilities of a clash increased.

But there was a more serious danger elsewhere. From their base in Dahomey, the French also sent up expeditions aiming at the country of Borgu, on the Lower Niger. This was of immense importance. The Niger in its upper course is navigable for nearly a thousand miles from Senegambia—and all this now was recognised as being in the French sphere. But from Ansongo, the huge river becomes for four hundred miles broken by a series of rapids which make it useless as a water-

way. Only the last stretch of five hundred miles from Djebba to the sea is navigable for good-sized vessels; and all this vital stretch was claimed by England. But the continuous efforts of other powers to secure a foothold in this region created uneasiness, and Captain Lugard, sent up in haste, was barely in time to sign a treaty at the capital of Borgu, before the arrival first of a French and then of a German party.

Mary Kingsley's concern with all this was, first, regret that matters had been allowed to drift till what England might simply have taken at her will was now only to be had with risk of European war; and secondly, that her aspiration for full scope to British expansion was threatened. That expansion, as she conceived it, meant crossing the continent: joining up the Niger Company's sphere in Hausaland across Lake Tchad to the upper waters of the Nile and to British East Africa. If the scheme was grandiose, it was less so than that of France which sought to connect French Congo—far south of the Niger—with the French possessions in North Africa.

But thirdly and chiefly, Mary Kingsley was concerned for the fate of the Niger Company. It was already indicated that as a means of reaching a settlement between England and France the Company might have to be sacrificed; partly because its power of making local ordinances for taxation might conflict with some general policy for West Africa; still more because its apparent weakness looked like a temptation to so aggressive a power as France had shown herself in these regions. This meant substituting the rule of the Colonial Office for the rule of Sir George Goldie; and Mary Kingsley thought the former ill inspired, the latter admirable. Whatever influence she had to use would be used for Sir George Goldie—all the more because at the crisis of this controversy he had lost his wife, to whom he was devoted, and between whom and Mary Kingsley there had been a singularly close bond.

But in this matter her influence was painfully thwarted.

It depended on her power with the Chamber of Commerce in Liverpool and Manchester—potent bodies. Here I cannot support by any external testimony what she herself says; but it is plain she was in constant conference with them. "I know," she writes, "they call me 'our Aunt'"; none the less, they understood her ability to command a hearing, on a subject to which the Press at large was indifferent, especially in those years when public interest was focussed on Mr. Rhodes in South Africa and on Kitchener on the Nile. No man rated her value higher than Sir Alfred Jones, president of the African Section of the Liverpool Chamber. Unhappily, Sir Alfred Jones and Sir George Goldie were reciprocally convinced of each other's dark designs: and there was the worst of blood between the Niger Company and the general body of traders.

I find some reflection of all this in what she wrote to George Macmillan in 1898—undated, but, I think, early:—

I am down here on commercio-politics and have cooled my head by correcting the fetish chapter. Things seem in an awful mess in West Africa and I am having a most tiring time here. I hope to be home to-morrow, for I have to speak at the Women Writers on Monday and live through three political dinners during the week and then lecture to the Cheltenham College.

Again on March 3:—

I have with gloomy prophecies temporarily abandoned the Empire to its fate, for, as I believe Theocritus says, it is a difficult thing many pigs for one man to drive very, and half the aforesaid pigs are not worth driving, and it's downright cruelty of me to twist the tails of those that are any more, so I have retired to ju ju to soothe my mind, and to consorting with Mr. Lecky to amuse myself, for he purrs in the most perfect way.

But there was another West African dispute which she was not willing to abandon; it was of a different kind—not international but inter-racial, within the British sphere. When she saw injustice done to native Africans,

and done by her own country, in the name of civilisation, then she could not sit still.

Sierra Leone was the oldest of the British West African colonies and had been for long the headquarters of British power on the coast. It began with the establishment in 1787 of an asylum for liberated slaves who might desire to return to Africa, and it covered at first an area of only some twenty miles square, including the site of Free Town and its harbour. This land was acquired by bargain from two native chiefs, and at first the government was entrusted to a company of philanthropists—whose governor for several years was Zachary Macaulay, the historian's father. But from 1807 on the Crown assumed direction; and gradually, for purposes of customs control, the coast-line was extended by successive agreements till its length was over two hundred miles, though the depth was for the most part a mere strip of a mile or less.

In course of time, agreements and treaties were made with chiefs of the hinterland whose trade passed down to this seaport. All these were voluntary. As a rule, the chiefs agreed to prohibit slave-raiding, and in all cases England guaranteed protection. The Protectorate thus formed came to be about the size of Ireland; but till 1888 its frontier to the rear was undefined, and only in 1894 was it actually surveyed and delimited, as a consequence of the unhappy clash at Waima.

Sir Frederick Cardew, who became Governor of Free Town in the end of 1894, was a man of great energy, and set about a thorough visitation of this region, which he found in the state produced by the raid of Samory's Sofas and the French and British pursuit of them. "Vast areas" were devastated and untenanted and slave raiding was rife. He resolved to introduce a civilised administration, partly by police. There existed a native Frontier Police force established ten years earlier, with European officers. It was, however, distributed in small posts, under the control of native sergeants, and as has often

happened in Africa, these men in some cases abused the prestige of their uniform. Sir Frederick Cardew proposed to strengthen the force; but it appeared to him that for opening up the country, a railway would be necessary. For this and "other developments," additional revenue was, in his own phrase, "essential." He proposed to levy this from the hinterland and submitted his projects to the Colonial Office, who approved them. As a preliminary to this assertion of a new régime, a Protectorate was formally proclaimed on July 31, 1896. The ordinance carried with it a number of clauses prohibiting all traffic in slaves and permitting any slave to claim freedom at a stipulated price. It also announced that as from January 1, 1898, a tax varying from five to ten shillings would be levied on all houses in the Protectorate. This tax did not apply to the Colony.

In the course of journeys through the Protectorate, the Governor had explained these proposals to a number of the chiefs, but had not secured their assent to the tax levy. After the publication of the Ordinance in the summer of 1896, a series of protests came in, which culminated in an elaborate petition drawn up in June 1897, when a large number of the chiefs had assembled in Free Town to take a part in the celebrations of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. Sir Frederick Cardew being then in England, the acting Governor replied, making some concessions, as for instance that payment could be made in goods. But the chiefs waited in Free Town for five months till November, when the Governor returned, and an interview took place, at which a peremptory answer was given that no further concessions could be made.

In the meantime the trading community had become alarmed and the Chambers of Commerce of Liverpool and Manchester both made representations advising the withdrawal of the hut-tax. But neither the Colonial Office nor Sir Frederick Cardew had much disposition to listen to the traders.

The chiefs undoubtedly determined on a combined refusal to pay. They were the more likely to take this course because some twenty years earlier a house-tax had been laid on the Colony; disturbances followed and the tax was taken off. The fact that in this later case no attempt was made to tax the colony must have had significance for them.

It is clear also that the governing authorities expected opposition and determined on drastic repression. In January 1898 the District Commissioners of the five districts into which the Ordinance had divided the Protectorate proceeded to their work and summoned before them the chiefs whose duty it was to collect the tax. Chiefs who refused to appear were arrested forcibly and in one case at least the Commissioner exceeded his power so far as to order the infliction of lashes. This, however, was stopped by the Governor. But the same commissioner, having assembled fifty chiefs and demanded their promises to pay, on their refusal ordered the whole assembly into imprisonment in Free Town, where they were set to breaking stones. Naturally, that indignity was felt even more than the punishment.

Events developed rapidly into a widespread rising, which very soon assumed the appearance of a general attempt to drive out the white man. Missionaries were attacked, Europeanised natives were attacked. The insurgents did not spare even the children of their own villages who had gone to missionary schools. The killings were reckoned at more than a thousand. In short, there was a kind of Indian Mutiny in miniature in England's oldest possession on the Coast. It was a thing without previous example in West Africa; and happily the like has not been seen again.

Yet—because it was not understood—very little attention was paid to the matter in the English Press. Small punitive expeditions in West Africa were of so frequent occurrence that this seemed nothing exceptional. I, for instance, never realised that whereas all previous

expeditions in West Africa had been designed either to check aggression on British territory or to stop slave-raiding and put down human sacrifice, in this case force had been employed to impose a new method of raising revenue, which could not be justified as tribute from the conquered. But from the point of view of the missionaries, which Sir Frederick Cardew shared, the rising was really produced by resentment of the interference with slavery; and the British public, from Lord Salisbury downwards, was seriously convinced of England's duty to put down this scourge.

The facts, however, bore a very different aspect to Mary Kingsley. She accepted fully the honesty of England's purpose in this matter, and she believed that England could make understood everywhere in Africa that slave-raiding and the slave trade must cease where the British flag was seen. It was possible to present this as part of natural justice. But all the regulations regarding slavery had been in full effect since the passing of the ordinance eighteen months earlier, and there had been no resistance. The position now was that the chiefs found themselves not only barred from a traffic by which they had profited, and insecure in the possession of their domestic slaves (whom they were not forbidden to retain); they were asked to pay for a police force against which they had legitimate grounds of complaint, and were asked to pay in a manner contrary to all their conceptions of justice. They had never been conquered; they had made treaties of friendship and commerce; and now the protector assumed the right to confiscate. The root of the matter, for her, lay in the difference between the African conception of property and that which governed the life of European States; and in this case, unlike that of slavery, the African conception was not opposed to elementary human justice.

When no one else spoke out, she took the field, addressing herself to the *Spectator* on March 19, 1898, in a letter which, after praise of an article published there



on the "Position of Britain in the World," she passed on to protest against action inconsistent with that position:—

The English tradition is to maintain the native law form when that law is not too bloodstained to be handled by a Christian gentleman. This tradition is a fine one, but it causes dangerous friction that alienates the affection and confidence of our dark fellow-subjects, if that native law form is said by England to be administered and is not administered, but in its place a mongrel uncertain thing, a thing which we necessarily get when we administer a law we do not take the trouble to understand, as in the case of African law. . . . An object lesson is before our eyes now in these disturbances connected with the enforcement of the hut-tax on the natives of the Protectorate of the Colony of Sierra Leone, a tax of 5s. per hut, a heavy tax because the African's annual wealth per individual is no more than £1 a year. But I pass over this and the anomaly that no municipal taxes have been collected from the inhabitants of Free Town, although Free Town is the place that benefits most by the taxes levied on the natives in the Protectorate zone. These are mere local questions; but this recurring attempt to levy hut-tax and its recurring rows are common to all Africa for exactly the same simple reason, namely, that this form of taxation is abhorrent to the principles of African law. One of the root principles of African law is that the thing you pay anyone a regular fee for is a thing that is not your own—it is a thing belonging to the person to whom you pay the fee—therefore if you have to pay the government a regular and recurring payment for your hut, it is not your hut, it is the property of the government; and the fact that the government has neither taken this hut from you in war, bought it of you, nor had it given as a gift by you, the owner, vexes you "too much," and makes you, if you are any sort of a man, get a gun. The African understands and accepts taxes on trade, but taxing a man's individual possession is a violation of his idea of property.

She went on to show how African property was divided into ancestral property of the tribe, family property and private property; and how, by putting a tax on every hut in a district, you hurt every form of property-owner and so united all against the tax. African law, though "full of intricacies and minor details," was, she said, "a fair and simple law in itself, and a little attention

would enable it to be maintained to the furtherance of the peace and prosperity of both our interests and those of the African native."

Then came her conclusion.

All that Africa requires for her advance at a healthy rate from the hands of our administrators there is a rule of merciless justice—tiger justice; but it must be justice, that true and complete justice that in itself contains Mercy. This thing incorruptible, England can give her, if England will only think.

That was the essence of all that she had to say about government in Africa, and her two ideals are implied in it. Where there was not knowledge, there could not be justice; and where there was not justice, there must be dishonour. She stood for the light of justice and for the honour of England.

Perhaps the greatest of her difficulties was that at this moment, within a year of Queen Victoria's second jubilee, England's self-complacency knew no measure, and based itself above all on England's achievements in colonisation. A vast expanse of imperial colour on the maps, and, what had more reality, the recent access of energy given by Mr. Chamberlain's assumption of the Colonial Office, had so wrought on imagination that the public could not easily conceive of mistakes as possible, nor of any claim set up against England's will as proper to be even considered. Later, she wrote to Morel about one of his articles:—

I was so glad to see that notice on expenditure; and I felt so lonely, having been by several people that afternoon regarded as almost blasphemous for saying anything against English Imperial government overseas. If I had said the government did not know how to manage the Church, or the Cabs, people would have regarded it as quite a reasonable opinion, but to go and go for the government regarding its management of alien races—well, that they thought extremely wrong.

One ally appeared in her support. Her friend John Holt wrote in the *Spectator's* next issue, questioning the necessity for increased expenditure and the justice

of putting new taxes on poor people. "Let it be remembered that the people who pay taxes in West Africa have no voice whatever in their imposition, and are without control in the expenditure of their money. It might be for the good of our interests if some representative man could have a voice in such matters." The *Spectator's* comment showed that it thought Mr. Holt was asking for "a black parliament"—not realising that he meant, what Mary Kingsley also meant, that those traders who furnished the revenue should have a representative part in the administration.

But after that, the fight was left to her; and she complained with some resentment that the educated Africans, though she knew them to be in agreement with her, made no sign. She went on alone, and not without effect, for the matter was raised in Parliament. This was, indeed, left for an Irish Nationalist to do, and the House was, with some justice, generally inclined to think that Irish nationalists had more desire to discredit England than to help justice. Yet Michael Davitt, who brought it forward in May, had the respect of all who heard him, and he relied chiefly on a quotation from an article (which I have not traced to its source) by Mary Kingsley, whom, he said, he understood to be a great admirer of Mr. Chamberlain. Within limits he was right. Her dislike of the Colonial Office did not prevent her from perceiving the Colonial Secretary's power and energy, and in this instance Mr. Chamberlain did not attempt to treat the Irish protest as merely factious opposition. He announced in reply that he proposed to appoint a Special Commission of Inquiry. After some weeks, Sir David Chalmers, who had many years' experience of the Coast as law officer, was named as the Commissioner. But Mr. Chamberlain, who always stood over his subordinates, refused to listen to the suggestion that Sir Frederick Cardew should be replaced at once by some less contentious personality.

So for a considerable period the matter was shelved ; yet the force of Mary Kingsley's protest had been felt, and she was called on to expound the African idea of property in a series of four long articles for the *Morning Post* (then edited by Nicol Dunn), and in August to speak on the same subject before the British Association.

There was even more decisive testimony that her words were not neglected. Mr. Chamberlain entered into private correspondence with her, and asked her, since she disapproved the hut-tax, to suggest an alternative.

She might, if she had been a different woman, have simply accepted this as a compliment, and replied that it was no business of a scientist to dictate to Government. But Chamberlain made it plain that he seriously wanted suggestions, and she felt it as a challenge, yet one which overtaxed her competence ; and she turned for advice to an odd quarter—the Wesleyan missionary, Mr. Kemp. Her letter to him written on April 25, 1898, sets out the position.

Briefly the thing is this. I wrote a letter to the *Spectator*, stating that there was a ground principle of African law, that if you paid a regular payment, however small, for the use of any article—that article was not your own—it was the property of the person you paid the payment to, and he could on failure of the payment, or by being offered a higher payment, take the thing. I pointed out that this conception of property was at the root of the resistance of the native to such things as the hut-tax, and the land ordinance, and in fact to all direct taxation. This general law of property I have found to exist in all the districts in which I have worked, and it is shown to exist, very clearly, in Sarbah's Fanti Customary Law. Though Sarbah does not state it himself. I wish to say nothing against him, but he is muddle-headed at moments, and doesn't see the wood for the trees. But I should like to know what your opinion is on the extent to which this law is recognised on the Gold Coast in native circles away from white influences. Anyhow, my statement of this law, and the joy with which sundry distinguished jurists recognised that it was a thing that explained other things, has led me into direct communication with Mr. Chamberlain, and now once a week I

get a letter from him and he gets a massive answer. He doesn't stick to this hut-tax only now, but asks suggestions on all sorts of points, and I see I am let in for writing a general and particular scheme for the administration of West Africa.

*Whether* he uses it, or any of it, or no, it throws a grave responsibility on me which I want you to share. There is no one else I can ask to do so. You know I like the traders, and would do anything I could to help them, but this is a thing beyond their immediate interests, and things beyond their immediate interests they have no general grasp of. It is a thing that affects the native, and though I know the savage form of him well enough, I know I do not know the semi-civilised and civilised half so well as you do. In fact, when Chamberlain asks for suggestions as to suitable forms of taxation in West Africa, as he did in his last letter, he is asking for something that will give him money to carry out his expensive form of government, without destroying the white trade and without oppressing the native. Can you suggest any form of taxation that will do this? I cannot. I have told him that the present form of government in West Africa, under which white man is against white man, is bad, for that sort of country. That it is bad from a moral point of view, because it necessitates interfering with native races, it does not yet half understand; that it entails sending out a large staff of officials to carry it on, whereby 35 per cent. of those whites die of fever. I have said that to make West Africa succeed—pay—advance, the system of dealing with it must be remodelled. But I said I did not suppose he would take that into consideration. He now writes and asks for this scheme.

She explained to Mr. Kemp that what she had in her mind was the system used by the Dutch in their tropical possessions; and she felt bound to produce some working application of it, for "it is quite clear to me," she wrote, "that it is no use our criticising the existing state unless we can offer a substitute."

There was a flash of her humour when he agreed to help: "It is a strange end to the drama to have a missionary and me arranging for the government of Africa and peacefully agreeing. I do not think Chamberlain himself can resist so touching a spectacle."

For the rest of that year her chief energy was expended on working out an answer to the challenge thrown

down. In public there was no talk of the hut-tax question; Sir David Chalmers was inquiring, and there was no further news of trouble: nobody except Mary Kingsley cared to know more.

But other and even larger interests in West Africa for some time excited the public mind; and the issue of these was scarcely less repugnant to her than the tragedy of Sierra Leone. Part of the reason why English newspapers paid so little attention to that local disturbance was that in these early months of 1898 there was grave menace of war with France. On February 18 Mr. Chamberlain read to the House of Commons telegrams from British officers, announcing that in the hinterland of Lagos and in the hinterland of the Gold Coast French troops had demanded the removal of the British flag from where it flew over native towns.

What had happened was this. In 1895 the race for treaties between English, French and Germans in the hinterland of Lagos had left Major Lugard the winner. The objective was the country of Borgu. There was some doubt whether Nikki inland or Boussa on the river was its capital. But the French were not standing on treaties. In December 1896 two expeditions left Dahomey, one of which swung eastward and occupied the country of Gurma in the rear of Togoland; and by a convention signed in July 1897 Germany recognised the French claim to Gurma. This barred Germany from access to the Niger; but Germany was not averse from seeing the French free to make encroachments on the British sphere which might even lead to war, and would certainly lead to strained relations, between these countries. The other expedition, which marched north from Dahomey, pushed up to Illo on the Niger, a territory over which no protectorate was yet definitely claimed. But from this point Lieutenant Bretonnet moved downstream and on February 9 entered Boussa. This town had a treaty with the Royal Niger Company, and its king had received a subsidy from them since 1890.

Further, in the *London Gazette* of 1895 it had been proclaimed as British. The king of Boussa at once reported to the Niger Company that his town had been forcibly occupied.

The news of this usurpation arrived immediately after the Company's forces had achieved a dramatic victory when a force of five hundred Hausas, with European officers and modern arms, defeated twenty thousand Fulani horsemen, clad, like Saladin's warriors, in coats of mail. This well-equipped and victorious little force was quite strong enough to dislodge Lieutenant Bretonnet. But Sir George Goldie's hands were tied. When the expedition against Nupé and Illorin was preparing, the French Government heard of it and raised a protest, declaring it was designed to encroach on their sphere. Lord Salisbury guaranteed that the force should not act anywhere north of a point well above Nupé and Illorin, but a considerable distance south of Boussa.

Meantime, the French, finding themselves undisturbed, went on to justify their claim to Borgu by a campaign of conquest; and the British Government was obliged to act. In October 1897 began the formation of the West African Frontier Force, under Colonel Lugard, amounting to the strength of a brigade. According as its units were formed, sections of it were pushed into the disputed zone, cutting across the French lines of posts. One of these parties was ordered by a body of thirty Senegalese to haul down the flag they had hoisted at Borea; they refused and the Senegalese camped outside the place. This was one of the incidents reported to the House of Commons. Matters went on, and more than once English troops found their way blocked by fixed bayonets: war seemed imminent when on July 14 news reached the opposing parties that as the outcome of a Commission which had begun to sit in October 1897, a Convention had been signed, under which the French were to abandon Boussa and all their

posts in Borgu. The withdrawal was carried out amicably, though with resentment among the French officers.

Mary Kingsley met Lugard while he was in London concerned with the organisation of the Frontier Force, and she was in correspondence with him about the liquor question—on which they sharply disagreed. But she had the highest admiration for the part he had played in helping to save for England at the eleventh hour, a deal of valuable territory.

It went otherwise in the other sphere. The most important state in the rear of Ashanti was Moshi, having a population of some three millions. In 1894 its king, Bokary Kountou—under whom were some five hundred lesser rulers—accepted a treaty with England and the promise of protection. But the treaty-maker was the black civilian engineer, Mr. Ferguson, and between Moshi and the coast lay the unsubdued Ashantis; and across the track further inland, Samory was raiding. Nevertheless, Bokary on four occasions refused to admit a French expedition. But in 1896 a strong force under Lieutenant Voulet moved down and occupied the capital, Wagadugu, from which Bokary fled towards his English protectors. They were slow in appearing. First came the Ashanti campaign; after this the troops were withdrawn and very inadequate parties sent up towards Moshi. On these Samory's forces inflicted defeat and captured a British officer. By October 1897 it had become clear that a decision must be reached, and, as has been seen, a Commission met in Paris to negotiate. But while in Nigeria, Lugard was set to organise the W.A.F.F., Major Northcott, an able soldier, was ordered to the Northern territories of the Gold Coast as High Commissioner and Commandant. He also had considerable force at his disposal and the exiled Bokary joined him hopefully; the population welcomed them; and on June 30, 1898, they were within a day's march of Wagadugu when news of the Convention reached



them and they learnt that Moshi was recognised as being in the French sphere. Northcott had the disagreeable task of informing Bokary that England had gone back on the pledge to which he trusted and that his people were handed over to the French, who had been asserting their power by very harsh measures—to use no worse word. But Lieutenant Voulet, as his later history showed, was not a man for whose actions France could fairly be held completely responsible.

I do not think that Mary Kingsley knew immediately this aspect of the transaction, which accorded so ill with her conceptions of England's duty. But she saw at once that the Gold Coast, like Sierra Leone, had been made into an enclave—though a much more extensive one; and she was bitterly concerned by another of the articles which conceded to France the whole north and east shores of Lake Tchad—thus ending her dream of an African Empire reaching across from the Niger to the Nile.

That dream was still open to the French, and their emissaries were busy in Abyssinia in June 1898 while Marchand was actually on the Nile watershed. A few months later, another clash, more resounding, after Kitchener's victory at Omdurman, ended the vision. But Mary Kingsley did not think Fashoda meant a triumph for Britain—though France took it so and was furious.

"France was not taken into confidence by her statesmen," she wrote to me. "There were men in the heart of the French Colonial party who knew. They had got for Fashoda (i) Sir George Goldie's head on a charger; (ii) Article IX; (iii) the East shores of Lake Tchad. One of the leaders of that party came to me when the people were triumphing over the Fashoda telegram and he said—'I come here not to shriek like they are outside, not to shriek like they are in Paris, but, you know.' I said, 'I know I am beaten: never now shall Nigeria and Uganda join hands.' 'Never

now shall I have an inland port in the Nile valley,' said he. 'You may,' said I, 'we are done for in West Africa.' 'Not you,' said he."

An article by her on "The Transfer of the Niger Territories," contributed to the *British Empire Review* for August 1899, suggests that in June 1898 the negotiators at Paris foresaw the collision on the Nile which would occur if Kitchener reached Khartoum victoriously; and that the French agreed in advance to abandon what they might have acquired there. But as a price they got a very large territory between the Niger and the sea, even though England had to break faith with a native ally. They also got, as she said to me, "Sir George Goldie's head on a charger."

Any student of West Africa is aware that the Royal Niger Company has been the only English institution in West Africa that France had any reason to fear in her great career of empire-making there. She, very wisely and perfectly justifiably, wished that obstacle removed. She has got it removed. The whole of the negotiations of the recent Anglo-French Convention constitutes a French triumph from start to finish. Gallant Major Marchand, whose courage, ability, and devotion to duty are beyond all praise, compelling the admiration of all right-minded men throughout the world, has no need to feel depressed at having had to leave that, according to general accounts, not particularly salubrious or cheerful spot, Fashoda. He practically conquered and has added to French territory thousands of square miles of Africa that are both strategically and intrinsically more valuable to her than Fashoda. I do not grudge France one mile of her African Empire nor its glorious future. I know on the whole she administers it well and she certainly has earned it by the enterprise and courage of her explorers. A set of explorers equal to those she has employed and supported in the West African regions since 1854, I do not think the world has ever seen in Africa, and she has backed up those men by admirable statecraft in Europe. Two of the many triumphs they have won for her are the suppression of the Royal Niger Company and Article IX in the Anglo-French Niger Convention. I refer to the article relating to differential dues. As an opener of French territory to English commerce, Article IX is a dead letter; as an opener of it to English manufacturers its action is practically this: English cotton goods

can be sold by French merchants in French possessions at a profit ten per cent. cheaper than they can be sold by any merchant in English possessions. Trade flows to the best market as water finds its own level. English cotton goods and English iron goods are essential to the stocking of a good West African market. The French merchants can, under the kind care of Article IX, now have those goods in free of duty. As French cottons go in duty free, so similarly must English cottons; and thus they will act as a factor in drawing the trade away from the English West African possessions where English and foreign cottons pay 10 per cent. duty.

The rest of the article deals at length with her view that administration by the Colonial Office would ruin what had been so well begun. But this was only a renewal of the main attack already launched in her book, of which an account must be given in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER X

### THE WRITING OF "WEST AFRICAN STUDIES"

I MUST try to give some picture of Mary Kingsley's life and her general occupations and preoccupations before discussing her second book, or a false impression might be conveyed. She was never absorbed in her own work to the exclusion of other interests, and every contact with her found a live response. Thus in February 1898 her letters to Mr. Kemp show that she was busying herself with a project for a service of trained nurses to be instituted at hospitals on the West Coast. She inclined to resist this, for the most characteristic of reasons: "I myself think that no one ought to go out to West Africa, unless they think their work is not only worth living for, but dying for. Don't laugh at me. I am sure you know what I mean."

This proposition was developed a couple of days later:

People up here do not realise West African conditions. These good women mean well, but they seem to think they will have hospitals with surgical and medical wards continually full of officers and gentlemen. We know this is not the case, and that a trained nursing staff at Accra, say, will be precious little good to a sick man at Salaga. Moreover, nursing in W.A. is only for religious women—who have something besides it to fill in their spare time with—or for women roustabouts like Miss Slessor, one or two others, and myself, who can cook and scrub and tidy up, and not only stand about and give directions dressed up in uniform.

Her advice was for hospital ships, with trained nurses on them, acting in conjunction with branch hospitals on shore, run by male orderlies.

A month later came the avowal of a great grief:

I know I am not clear, but the truth is I am cut up over Lady Goldie's death. I was very fond of her. She was a sweet and gentle lady, so unlike most of the people up here, and from the first

time I saw her she fascinated me, and has exercised an immense influence over me, that I feel lost without her. In all this West Coast battle of politics and factions with their unfair abuse of each other's intentions she was so apart from all that evil in it, so loving to all that was good, that people used to think she did not understand. I only wish I understood one-tenth part as well.

She wrote also to George Macmillan concerning Sir George Goldie, who at that time had to face the certain extinction of the Company through which he had accomplished so much, and moreover had to sit still while its territory suffered usurping occupation.

It seems hard with all his worries that he should have been so cruelly hit where it could hurt him most. I cannot bear to think of it, and so I think of nothing else but it, and am wretched.

Her own personal loss was grievous. A year later she complained to Sir Matthew Nathan of her isolation, her lack of intimate ties. Then she adds: "Sir George Goldie has to tolerate me because his wife loved me, and he loved, and loves her." "Loved" was a word Mary Kingsley seldom used. But in the dedication of *West African Studies* "To my brother and to my Friend who is dead," I have no doubt that the friend she does not name is the one of whom she said "she loved me."

At this time she herself was very ill, suffering from her weak spot, "my shattered heart." "Such a head and such a heart as I have got to get on with are enough to make anyone miserable," she wrote to George Macmillan. Yet in the midst of her suffering she was busy trying to prevent the use of unworthy weapons in the fight she had on hand.

"Things are going very bad down in W.A., it seems to me," she told Mr. Kemp in May, "and now those traders, maddened by the ruin the action of the government has caused, are going about like raging lions, fit to devour anyone." Accusations of brutality were rife against the officers who had been employed to collect the hut-tax. She had tried to keep these out of print. Moreover, she said:—

I have done my best and I hope succeeded in preventing a savage attack being made in the Press on the missionary party at large, over this affair. The idea was to point out how absolutely silent the missionaries had been, how they have not stirred a finger to save this fearful waste of life, winding up with some lively statements about the supineness of the Baptists in the Congo Free State.

I pointed out that if the missionary interfered with politics he was then and there abused, and that this affair was political, etc.

There follows some further reference to Stead's review of an article by her, and then a passage of unusual self-revelation :—

You say I do not care a rap. You are hard. I do. I care a great deal for what you and Mrs. Kemp, Mrs. Green, Goldie, and Tylor say. Now and again I cannot see things as you do, it hurts me, and I hold my tongue as much as my general duty allows me. I feel I may be sort of colour-blind, but I must be honest in my small way. I will not weary you more on this. It is a sad situation for you, a Wesleyan, to be Father Confessor to what is honestly and truly a very tortured soul. As for my not showing the best part of me—well, the best part of me is all this doubt, and self-distrust and melancholy, and heartache over other people. Why should I show it to people I don't care for and don't know? I put on armour and coruscating wit, according to Stead—who is too big a fool to see through it—when I go out to battle. If I did not—well, I should be like Goldie, hurt and embittered, and in my case, *not* in his, unfit for combat.

Her friends would sooner have seen her keep out of the fights in which she put on this armour of jesting to cover her sensibility. She answered such advice from Mr. Kemp by giving her justification for taking the fight on herself—which in this case, had meant defending the liquor trade by a powerful article in the *Fortnightly*, replying to Lugard's denunciation of it. The article itself, being controversy, is less important for us than what she wrote to defend herself for having written it :

When did I ever "bristle up" against anything you said? It's not in me. I feel a brute for having given you this trouble to write so carefully, but I am *not* sorry I have done it.

Goldie tackled me, and said much what you say, when he heard I was going to answer Lugard's article. I admire and honour him, you, and Lugard, and Nassau. It would give me infinitely greater peace and pleasure to do what would please you than to do what would please other sets of men in W.A. But deliberately, cold-bloodedly—after what Sir George had said—I sat down and thought the thing out quietly—I may not use your word prayerfully, or you will be displeased—and I decided that though I must lose by it what I valued greatly, it was my duty to do it for these reasons:

(a) Because I knew that if I did it I should prevent others doing it; others who hated missions and who hated Goldie, and who would say things of both, true and untrue, that would pain both keenly, and that would tend to extend that great evil, the antagonism between white men in West Africa. I need not say Sir George has *no* knowledge of this reason any more than you had.

(b) Because it seems to me great evil is done by the exaggerations of the Anti-Liquor Association in distracting public attention from the grave evils that exist in West Africa from other causes than the liquor, and making the General Public think that they had only to abolish the liquor traffic and W.A. would be a paradise.

(c) Because I saw someone must tackle the West Coast trader (either) Sir George, Lugard, or Nassau. You call him a brute. If you call a man a brute he is liable to be one. There is no man so hard as a good man, and there has not been a place that I have lived at in West Africa where I have not heard a trader some time or other say: "If the missionaries would only care a little for us, but no one cares for us." Now, I am not dogmatising to you, but it seems to me when a class of men get this feeling in their hearts it breeds and multiplies evil. You know these young men when they first go out; neither better nor worse than young men who stay at home. I hold that if the hand of sympathy were kept on their shoulders, if they felt someone cared whether they made brutes or fools of themselves, or lived honourably, they would be honourable. Now, Mr. Dennis Kemp, will you kindly suggest who I am to tell them who cares for them? I cannot say the missionary does—they would wink. I cannot tell them their wives, mothers, and sisters do, or they would wink, sadly, but emphatically, as Mr. Stead would say. I can only say England cares, and then privately, as it were, go and kick England downstairs for not caring.

Go and tell Manchester, Sheffield, Leicester, etc. "These men are dying in West Africa that you may live here."—It is true, Sir,

though they neither of them know it, "dumb driven cattle" that they are, and then England sort of recognises there is something in what I say. Anyhow, it does to write a little article on in the local paper, then the local paper goes down the West Coast, and the trader reads it and it pulls him together. But there, I know you will laugh at my little mission, and say I shall be wanting subscriptions next. But I know you recognise the West Coast trader is a field for mission enterprise, as they call a choice cannibalising spot; or you may say, "Ah! very fine, Miss K., but that does not justify you in saying what you have said about the trader as he is."

I have justification for every word of that from my experience of certain traders. I have never known one who has been a curse to the West African. I have known those to whom the West African has been a curse, who have been a curse to themselves, but that is not the same thing. Then there is another point I humbly beg you personally to take into consideration. You know the semi-civilised Gold Coast; the factory system there is a bad one. Things are better down coast, when there is an old steady-headed man in charge of the factory, ruling his assistants with a rod of iron. This is far better than the loose coast-town life. Such steady-headed men who have been a power for good that I have known are Forshaw, Powis, Cowan, Hamilton, Watson, Boles, Newberry, Cockshutt, Harris, O'Shaughnessy, and many French and Germans, I will not bore you with. They form to my mind a sufficiently heavy percentage in the class to make me think the class is worthy of my sacrificing myself for it, that is what it amounts to. But where have I said "honourable, straightforward, moral," in a lump?

This followed:—

9.6.98. Very many thanks. *You* have not said anything to pain me. It is I who lash myself and torment myself with the fear that if *you* people to whom I look up do not understand what there is behind much that I say, you will think me evil; and then I feel I cannot explain myself, and so you get yards of observations in a scattered state and ill-written, and I add to my other self-reproach that of wearying you when I know that you have so much to do and think of. But just now you are really very important to me, for there is no one else I can talk this matter over with, and I am trying very hard to think this West African affair out, native, trader, and Government: no, not missions. Never again am I going to go for missions. Well, you are quite right



when you say I gave the trader credit "for being an immense power for good." He is an immense power, and he ought to be for good always, as it is he is only for good now and then, here and there. I am not quite so sure as you would say whether I think he is as *great* a power for good as the missionary. I have not thought about it. I was just regarding missionary and trader as representing two sides in white culture towards the African. It is not necessary for me to give myself airs and to pretend to preside over a prize distribution to missionaries and traders. As to what you say about the traders' statements on natives—mission-trained or bush-men—I agree with you. I often feel the traders knew the native but were quite incapable of thinking about them. It is difficult to explain, but you would hear the trader abusing the natives up hill and down dale, and yet see they were fond of them. There was Newberry of Batanga; if I had not known N. ashore in his factory I should have imagined he was a perfect brute, who regarded natives as brutes. But knowing him, I used to smile over N.'s steamboat talk, for I knew he would get up at any hour of the night to potter after a sick man or woman, and that he shielded a whole population of his district from German Government brutality, at no financial profit to himself.

Second. I don't wish you or any missionary to leave the trader "unmolested." Go for them, Mr. Kemp, make them ashamed of doing what an *Englishman* would scorn to do. You, Nassau, and Ovens, can do this. You are big men physically, you can knock about the bush. You are better educated. No one can look down on you. Now, I am going to upset hot water over myself again. But there are missionaries on whom men instinctively look down. They are good true men, etc. But there is something weakly in the way they talk and walk. You men are so dependent on these things, in forming your opinion of each other.

Third. Well, it's just what one would expect of you as a Christian gentleman to spare the feelings of the wives and mothers of those men.

Fourth. I often hear how much you and Mrs. Kemp were valued by the traders. Mr. . . ., whose name you have not seen in the angelic catalogue, came here the other day with Mr. . . ., and he asked me if I had heard where you were, and gave it as his opinion you were a loss, but Mrs. Kemp was the greatest loss to the Gold Coast of anyone he'd known.

It was about this time, August 1898, that, with many observations on "the severity of the struggle," she

transferred her belongings from the flat to a house in the main Hammersmith Road—32, St. Mary Abbott's Terrace, close to the bridge over the railway to Addison Road station. Less notable memories than hers are recorded by mural tablets, and this one should be so recognised before the terrace is pulled down. The baggage that went with her was highly varied; her little hall was hung with trophies, over and above the idol and its pervasive odour. I was often cautioned against puncturing myself (or my bicycle) with a poisoned arrow. "I am feeling like an uninsured wreck from my various anxieties and exertions," she wrote to me, when the move was just completed in August 1898. For she was always, if not her own charwoman, at least the director of operations in such household affairs. On less occasions, if a nail had to be driven, or a curtain hung, she drove or hung it.

By October 20 she was confiding to me something of her progress with the political side of her book; but first she wanted to know if I could tell her "right offhand, without a moment's trouble or investigation, when the Crown Colony system was founded." "I have ploughed all my historian friends with this simple question quite unintentionally," she adds, "for I am like Mrs. Thimgummy in *David Copperfield* and only want to know." Apparently she often found that historians had their limitations; for she once wrote to Sir Matthew Nathan:

I may not know History, but I have known Historians. Froude was a sort of uncle of mine, for one, and I have known others. I, as a scientific man, would not be seen dead in the same street with Historians. I know my big ju ju Spinoza would not have passed them as science.

Her own limitations were always painfully present to her mind, but they were not limitations of accurate knowledge, but of power of expression. It often led to my misunderstanding of her. Once something that I had written provoked a reply from her—in public—and apologies from me in private. Here is her letter:—

MY DEAR MR. STEPHEN GWYNN,

10,000 times no. You are an angel—you have not done anything to me. I humbly beg and implore you never for one moment to think anything you can say about anything I have published anywhere can make me quarrel with you. It is not that I don't care for what you say; it is that I don't care for what I say in print. I say it carefully, believing the same to be true in substance and in fact. I want to say it well when it comes to politics, because men's minds, bodies and estates hang on the thing in a way, but I know I am structurally incapable of saying it well, and then when anyone comes along and abuses it, I have the consolation of a prophet whose prophecies have come off, mixed with remorse that I may have damaged a good cause. But for most of the causes I go in for, it's me or nobody. Who cares, except those hit personally, about differential dues and native law, but your humble servant? It would be a lot better for these things if a better person did care for them and would take them on and let me go and skylark and study.

Or, as she put it more distinctly in a letter to Morel :—

When giving any account of anything concerning my own goings on—fetish, fishes, native customs, law—I can write. I know I know. I don't care if I am understood or not. My heavy stuff goes in to Günther, Tylor, Köhler of Berlin and other ju jus who pass it, but when I am writing on this thing on which men's lives hang, even you would be very sorry for me if you only knew how hard I try to make men like you see it, and how I reproach myself for not being able to write better, and how savage I am that it is left for me to do *anything* in the matter *at all*. I don't like doing it. I want to go and skylark and enjoy myself in Africa and find out why and what and all that about sanctuaries that no chief, no secret society, dare violate.

In order to carry out what she took to be the call of duty—the odd job that needed her—she set aside the adventures on which her heart was set, and through which, if she cared for distinction, the way to distinction lay open; she entered a field for which she was not equipped and turned what might have been the congenial labour of writing into a heart-breaking weariness.

The book must have been complete before the end of 1898 except for the political section, which she says

more than once, was being delayed till she could see Sir David Chalmers' report on the Sierra Leone disturbances. But it became clear to her that publication of this was likely to be deferred because the report was likely to be damning; and in point of fact it was held over for many months, in order that it might appear with Sir Frederick Cardew's reply. This, needless to say, did not encourage her to mitigate her strictures in her volume, which actually appeared at the close of January 1899.

Technically speaking, it was not so much a book as a hold-all. It contained 633 pages, of which 193 were appendices, mostly contributed by two trader friends of hers. Mr. John Harford described a voyage to the Oil Rivers about 1875, and Count de Cardi devoted 150 pages to the natives of the Niger Coast protectorate. She herself added twenty pages, cataloguing the trade goods used in seventeenth-century trade with Africa. All this was valuable material for a few students, but it made a heavy burden for the book to carry.

Her own work began with two introductory chapters originally written for the Travel book which (as has been seen already) described the voyage out, and Sierra Leone. Two more deal with African characteristics, and with fishing in West Africa. After this loose preliminary stuff, we come to the first part of what is to be found only in this book—the full expression of her serious mind.

The subject is Fetish: "by which I mean," she says, "the religion of the natives of the Western Coast of Africa when they have not been influenced either by Christianity or Mahommedanism;" and her opening words on this subject come with a shock of contrast by their gravity:—

"The final object of all human desire is a knowledge of the nature of God."

That is in itself a *credo*. So certainly is the avowal in one of the last things she ever wrote for print, a letter

to *The New African*,<sup>1</sup> dated from the liner which took her on her last voyage.

"I yield to no one in the admiration for Jesus Christ, and I believe in the Divine origin, but the religion his ministers preached I have never been able to believe in."

What she did believe in is expressed in the opening of her chapter on Fetish, which divides into three main classes "the human methods, or religions, employed to gain this object—the knowledge of the nature of God."

*Firstly*, the submission to and acceptance of a direct divine message.

*Secondly*, the attempt by human intellectual power to separate the conception of God from material phenomena, and regard Him as a thing apart and unconditioned.

*Thirdly*, the attempt to understand Him as manifest in natural phenomena.

I personally am constrained to follow this last and humblest method, and accept as its exposition Spinoza's statement of it, "Since without God nothing can exist or be conceived, it is evident that all natural phenomena involve and express the conception of God, as far as their essence and perfection extend. So we have a greater and more perfect knowledge of God in proportion to our knowledge of natural phenomena. Conversely (since the knowledge of an effect through a cause is the same thing as the knowledge of a particular property of a cause), the greater our knowledge of natural phenomena the more perfect is our knowledge of the essence of God which is the cause of all things."

At bottom she recognised that the native African's religion was akin to her own—"a pantheism which is, I confess, a form of my own religion" as she said elsewhere.<sup>2</sup>

I cannot say I either disbelieve or believe in it, for on the one hand I see it as a religion of the third class, but on the other I know that Fetish is a religion that is regarded by my fellow white men as the embodiment of all that is lowest and vilest in me—not altogether without cause.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix.

<sup>2</sup> *West African Studies*, p. 95.

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix, p. 267.

Yet from the point of view of science, and above all the science of government, it was necessary, she held, to understand this religion—if only because it is so largely the cause of what Europe rightly regards as crime. Here is her apologia for fetish in an address delivered to the Psychical Research Society.

You will often hear this religion of fetish called a religion of terror and painted black with crimson patches. Well, facts are facts; find me a more cheerful set of human beings in this world than the West Africans who believe in fetish; find me a region where crime for private greed is so rare as in West Africa, and then, and not till then, will I say fetish is a horrible thing. I will grant you there is human sacrifice under it from Sierra Leone to the Niger; I will grant you there is a sending down with the dead of their wives, slaves and friends; I will grant you it kills witches, that it produces cannibalism in this region; but before you write down the men who do these things as fiends, I ask you to read any respectable book on European history, to face the Inquisition and the fires of Smithfield, and then to go and read your London Sunday newspapers. West Africa could not keep a Sunday newspaper going in crimes between man and man; its crimes are those arising from a simple direct absolute belief in religion.<sup>1</sup>

Add to this her clear distinction between what African religion is and is not:—

We have in Fetish a religion in which its believers do not hold that devotion to religion constitutes Virtue. The ordinary citizen is held to be most virtuous who is least mixed up in religious affairs. He can attain Virtue, the love and honour of his fellow-men, by being a good husband and father, an honest man in trade, a just man in the palaver-house, and he must, for the protection of his interests, that is to say, not only his individual well-being, but the well-being of those dependent on him, go in to a certain extent for religious practices. He must associate with spirits because spirits are in all things and everywhere and over everything; and the good citizen deals with the other spirits as he deals with that class of spirits we call human beings; he does not cheat the big ones of their dues; he spills a portion of his rum to them; he gives

<sup>1</sup> *Journal of the Psychical Research Society*, Vol. XIV, July 1899.

them their white calicoes; he treats his slave spirits honourably, and he uses his slave spirits for no bad purpose, and if any great grief falls upon him he calls on the great over-lord of gods, mentioning these things.<sup>1</sup>

Is that, after all, so very different from the attitude to religion, let us say, of Quintus Horatius Flaccus? At any rate, it helps me to understand why when she got upset out of a canoe on the Ogowé, it was her first care to recover a battered copy of Horace's *Odes* which had been (as I gather from that one reference) the constant companion of her travels.<sup>2</sup>

She turns aside from her main subject to consider the alternatives to Fetish—Islam and Christianity—and to discuss the reason of the great powers of immediate appeal to the African which they both possess.

The African has a great over-god, and below him lesser spirits, including man; but the African has not in West Africa, nor, so far as I have been able to ascertain, elsewhere in the whole Continent, a God-man, a thing that directly connects man with the great over-God. This thing appeals to the African when it is presented to Him by Christianity and Islam.

It is, I am quite aware, not doctrinally true to say that Islam offers him a God-man; nevertheless, in Mohammed practically it does so, and that too in a more easily believable form—by 'easily' I do not mean that it is necessarily true. Moreover, it minimises the danger of death in a more definite way, more in keeping with his own desires, and it is more reconcilable with his conscience in the treatment of life as he has to live it. Most of the higher-class Africans are traders; Islam gives an easier clearer line of rectitude to a trader than its great rival in Africa—under African conditions.

There are many who will question whether conscience is a sufficiently large factor in an African mind for us to think of taking it into account, but whether you call it conscience, or religious bent, or fear, the factor is a large one. An African cannot say, as so many Europeans evidently easily can, "Oh, that is all right from a religious point of view, but one must be practical, you know;"

<sup>1</sup> *West African Studies*, p. 151.

<sup>2</sup> Incidentally also, this reference is the one fact which shows me that she read Latin.

and it is this factor that makes me respect the African deeply and sympathise with him, for I have this same unmanageable hinder-some thing in my own mind, which you can call anything you like; I myself call it honour. Now conscience when conditioned by Christianity is an exceedingly difficult thing for a trader to manage satisfactorily to himself. A mass of compromises have to be made with the world, and a man who is always making compromises gets either sick of them, or sick of the thing that keeps on nagging at him about them, or he becomes merely gaseous-minded all round.

I think if you will consider the case you will see the workability of Islam is one of the chief reasons of its success in Africa. It is, from many African points of view, a most inconvenient religion, with its Radmahizan, bound every now and again to come in the height of the dry season; its restrictions on alcoholic drinks and gambling; but on the whole it is satisfying to the African conscience. Moreover, like Christianity, it lifts man into a position of paramount importance in Creation. He is the thing God made the rest for. I have often heard Africans say, "It does a man good to know God loves him; it makes him proud too much." *Well at any rate it is pleasanter than Fetish, where man, in company with a host of spirits, is fighting for his own hand, in an arena before the gods, eternally.*<sup>1</sup>

But my business here is to tell the story of Mary Kingsley's life; and her views of religion, African or European, do not greatly affect it, for they did not get her into trouble. The parts of this book of hers which have most interest for the biographer are those which concern her own life and the human lives of men.

They begin with chapters on trade—naturally, since to her trade was at the root of European history and government in West Africa. "To me," she says, "the life-blood of England is her trade." Population pressure makes emigrants. Commercial pressure drives Englishmen overseas, even to climates not suitable for colonisation, because "such a climate eats steel and iron as a rabbit eats lettuces." Strong races, especially the great manufacturing peoples of England and Germany, "have the same habit in their commercial production

<sup>1</sup> *West African Studies*, p. 107.



that they have in their human production—the habit of overdoing it for their own country.”

Just as Lancashire, for example, turns out more human beings than can comfortably exist there, so does she turn out more manufactured articles than can be consumed there; and just as the surplus population created by a strong race must find other lands to live in, so must the surplus manufactures of a strong race find other markets; both forms of surplus are to a strong race wealth.

The main difference between these things is that the surplus manufactured article is in no need of considering climate in the matter of its expansion. It stands in a relation to a man who goes out into the world with it akin to that of the wife and family to the colonist; the trader will no more meekly stand having his trade damaged than the colonist will stand having his family damaged; but at the same time, the mere fact that the climate destroys trade-stuff is, well, all the better for trade, and trade, moreover, leads the trader to view the native population from a different standpoint to that of the colonist. To that family man the native is a nuisance, sometimes a dangerous one, at the best an indifferent servant, who does not do his work half so well as in a decent climate he can do it himself. To the trader the native is quite a different thing, a customer. A dense native population is what the trader wants; and on their wealth, prosperity, peace and industry, the success of his endeavours depends.<sup>1</sup>

The advantage that tropical Africa has over such markets as India or China is, she thinks, first that the trade is mainly one of goods against goods, not against cash (so giving a double profit), and second, that the danger of raising up competitors where you educate and pacify is far less. Trade expansion is good for all parties concerned, but in Africa more than in Asia it tends to perpetuate itself. “It is the one and only expansion that in itself desires the national peace and prosperity of the native races with whom it deals,” and in Africa it had no such reason to be jealous of growing peace and prosperity as it might find—(and has found)—in India. It worked for the good of mankind at large, but had nothing to do with professed philanthropy—for which she had no love.

<sup>1</sup> *West African Studies*, p. 251.

A philanthropist is a person who loves man; but he or she is frequently no better than people who kill lapdogs by over-feeding, or who shut up skylarks in cages; while it is quite conceivable to me, for example, that a missionary could kill a man to save his soul, a philanthropist will kill his soul to save his life, and there is in this a difference. I have never been able to get up any respectful enthusiasm for the so-called philanthropist, so that I have to speak of him with calm care: not as I have spoken of the missionary, feeling he was a person I could not really harm by criticising his methods.<sup>1</sup>

What was worse to her mind, the philanthropic party tended by its alliance to corrupt the true missionary—"for to it I trace that tendency to harp upon horror and general sensationalism which so sharply differentiates the modern from the classic missionary reports." This again had "led to our present policy of destroying powerful native states or the power of the African ruling classes at large"; and so, secondarily, to war in West Africa. For this the blame was directly due, not to the mission party, but to the Crown Colony system.

Any reasonable system of its age would long ere now have known the African at first hand, not as it knew him, and knows him only, at its headquarters, London, from second-hand vitiated reports. It has, nowadays, at its service the common sense and humane opinions of the English trade lords as represented by the Chambers of Commerce of Liverpool and Manchester; but though just at present it listens to what they say—thanks to Mr. Chamberlain—yet it cannot act on their statements, but only querulously says, "Your information does not agree with our information."<sup>2</sup>

Then—writing, it must be remembered, before the Chalmers Report had been published, and therefore without being able to refer to its conclusions, though she knew them—she points the moral from the Sierra Leone outbreak.

Six months before the hut-tax there was put on, the Chambers had strongly advised the Government against it, and had received in reply the answer that "The Secretary of State sees no reason to

<sup>1</sup> *West African Studies*, p. 272.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 275.

suppose that the hut-tax will be oppressive, or that it will be less easy to collect in Sierra Leone than in Gambia." Why, you could not get a prophetic almanac into a second issue if it were not based on truer knowledge than that which made it possible for such a thing to be said.<sup>1</sup>

I shall not attempt to sketch here the detailed alternative to the Crown Colony system which she proposed for West Africa. Its main recommendation has been, completely disregarded, which was that the trading community should be associated with the Government. This she believed could be effected by creating an African Council sitting in England, and consisting of members nominated by the Chambers of Commerce of Liverpool, Manchester, London, Bristol and Glasgow. Associated with it would be two Sub-Councils, one sitting in England, of lawyers and doctors; the other sitting in Africa, of West African Chiefs. Over the whole would be a Governor-General dividing his year between Africa and England, and responsible for all the West African clans, each of which would have a Governor under him.

It is idle to criticise these rough outlines; England's policy has not utilised the trading community for purposes of council or administration. It is, however, worth noting that the whole of Nigeria, in her day three separate governments, is now under a single ruler; and that Lord Lugard has urged the importance of enabling the Governor-General to retain his control of administration even when on furlough at home. In other words, he agrees with her on the need for greater continuity.

Another of her proposals to which no effect was given, and which would certainly have been difficult to carry out, was the plan of collecting customs in England from the shippers, instead of from their representatives on the Coast. Multiplying European clerks on the Coast meant multiplying death, in her eyes, and this was a waste she eagerly sought to avoid. Yet here it is fair to say

<sup>1</sup> *West African Studies*, p. 275.

that science has achieved much of what she sought for by lessening the death roll.

She would have all revenue a charge upon trade. Direct taxation she ruled out as contrary to African principles. "From a fiscal standpoint direct taxation of a non-Mohammedanised, non-Christianised community is rank foolishness, for reasons known to every ethnologist." Knowledge of ethnology was a necessary part of government to her, holding as she did with Sir George Goldie's dictum, "If the welfare of the native races is to be considered, if dangerous results are to be obviated, the general policy of ruling on African principles through native rulers must be followed for the present."<sup>h</sup> This, she said, was very different from "ruling on European principles through natives," as when they sought to collect a hut-tax through "the unfortunate native cat-paw chief."

Yet African principles could not be allowed unchecked play. England was entitled, she held, to claim the *Oberh  heit*, carrying the right, for instance, to prohibit slave-raiding, human sacrifice and such other things as were wholly irreconcilable to the European conscience; and for the assertion of this right she was not one to shrink from force. Here is a passage which if it is not necessary in exposition of her theory is vital for the understanding of the woman:—

Now when I say England is behaving badly to the African, I beg you not to think that the philanthropic party has increased. I come of a generation of Danes who when the sun went down on the Wulpsand were the men to make light enough to fight by with their Morning Stars; and who, later on, were soldiers in the Low Countries and slave-owners in the West Indies, and I am proud of my ancestors; for whatever else they were, they were not humbugs; and the generation that is round me now seems to me in its utterances at any rate tainted with humbug. I own that I hate the humbug in England's policy towards weaker races for the sake of all the misery on white and black it brings; and I think, as I see you wasting lives and money, sowing debt and difficulties all over West Africa by a hut-tax in Sierra Leone,

fighting for the sake of getting a few shillings you have no right to whatsoever out of the African—who are you that you should point your finger in scorn at my tribe? I, as one of the tribe, blush for you, from the basis that you are a humbug and not scientific, which I presume you will agree is not the same thing as my being a philanthropist. . . .

There is just the same difference (she goes on), to my mind between an unnecessary war on an unarmed race and a necessary war on the same race, as there is between killing game that you want to support yourself with or game that is destructive to your interests, and on the other hand the killing of game just to say that you have done it. . . .

Our past wars in West Africa, I mean all our wars prior to the hut-tax war, have been wars in order to suppress human sacrifice, to protect one tribe from the aggression of another, and to prevent the stopping of trade by middlemen tribes. These things are worth fighting for. The necessity we have been under to fight them has largely arisen from our ancestors shirking a little firm-handedness in their generation.<sup>1</sup>

Her root objection to the hut-tax was moral.

These attacks on property in the form of direct taxation are, to the African, treachery on the part of England, who from the first has kept on assuring the African that she does not mean to take his country from him, and then, as soon as she is strong enough in his eyes, deliberately starts doing it. When you once get between two races the feeling of treachery, the face of their relationship is altered for ever, altered in a way that no wholesome war, no brutality of individuals can alter. Black and white men for ever after a national breach of faith tax each other with treachery, and never really trust each other again.<sup>1</sup>

Yet from her standpoint it seemed that it should be easier for Englishmen and Africans to understand and trust each other than for Europeans and Asiatics.

My feelings classify the world's inhabitants into Englishmen, by which I mean Teutons at large, Foreigners, and Blacks. Blacks I subdivide into two classes, English Blacks and Foreign Blacks. English Blacks are Africans. Foreign Blacks are Indians, Chinese and the rest. Of course, everything that is not Teutonic is, to put it mildly, not up to what is; and equally,

<sup>1</sup> *West African Studies*, pp. 313-14 and 317.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 318.

of course, I feel more at home with, and hold in greater esteem the English Black.<sup>1</sup>

Marshal Lyautey has expressed in one of his books the same feeling that relations between Europeans and Africans are franker and more cordial than the intuitive recoil which arises in the East—as if the Asiatic withdrew into something secret and aloof.

Yet Mary Kingsley when she talked of the Africans as being English blacks—that is to say, differing from other coloured races as Teutons from other Europeans—did not mean that they were human beings of the same kind. They were to her a species as distinct, to use her own illustration, as an oak tree from a palm. You would never make Europeans of Africans; and it seemed to her that the most perceptible "lift in culture" was produced—as in the Hausa States—by Mohammedanism, "brought in through Africans where there is no fundamental race difference."

What, then, was to be the guiding principle for England in West Africa? since, in order that Englishmen might prosper at home, England must acquire and retain power in West Africa.

All we need look to is justice. Love for our fellow-man, pity, charity, mercy, we need not bother our heads about, so long as we are just. These things are of value only when they are used as means whereby we can attain justice. . . .

There are many who hold murder the most awful crime a man can commit, saying that thereby he destroys the image of his Maker; I hold that one of the most awful crimes one nation can commit on another is destroying the image of Justice, which in an institution is represented more truly to the people by whom the institution has been developed than in any alien institution of Justice; it is a thing adapted to its environment. This form of murder by a nation I see being done in the destruction of what is good in the laws and institutions of native races. In some parts of the world, this murder, judged from certain reasonable standpoints, gives you an advantage; in West Africa, judged from

<sup>1</sup> *West African Studies*, pp. 16, 329.

any standpoint you choose to take, it gives you no advantage. By destroying native institutions there, you merely lower the moral of that African race, stop trade, and the culture advantages it brings both to England and West Africa.<sup>1</sup>

Whatever else is to be remembered about Mary Kingsley, this passage ought never to be forgotten.

<sup>1</sup> *West African Studies*, pp. 331-2.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE HUT-TAX CONTROVERSY

IT is not a profitable thing to review old reviews, but since I am concerned to estimate the effect produced by Mary Kingsley on her contemporaries, something of the kind is necessary here. Almost every paper in England gave very full notice to her *West African Studies*; and since her main purpose was to draw attention to West African affairs, that in itself meant success. So far as regarded the controversial part—and much of the book was a ringing challenge to the system of West African government—there was naturally a division of voices. *The Times* was committed by tradition and temperament to the official view; it was also the chief organ of the anti-liquor propaganda; and it came down on her.

She wrote to George Macmillan:—

I am sorry you are vexed about *The Times*, but there is a good old saying—those who play with the dogs must expect to be bit by the fleas—and I knew from the first I was in that Crown Colony affair playing considerably with the dogs. Hence my repeated warnings to you not to expect a great sale for that book. I knew that the C.O. could not gainsay what I said. I knew the only thing they could do would be to try and smother it, and that they would do this thing because W.A. is not generally an interesting thing in England. It has not got a vote. The gratitude of Liverpool and Manchester comes from a knowledge of this. I have given them their first public hearing, and therefore they put an absolutely fictitious value on me which worries and oppresses me, and for the rest I must fight *The Times* and will, and I most sincerely hope you will not regret in the end having published *W.A.S.*



The sales, however, were such as to console a more exacting publisher; and it must have been a satisfaction to read in the *Manchester Guardian* that her criticism constituted "the most damaging attack on the general administration in West Africa that had yet been made," and came from "a diligent and intrepid student of facts as they are rather than of theories of government." Then followed a sentence which is worth remembering.

Miss Kingsley has followed no school of West African policy, but, if we mistake not, she has laid the foundation of one.

Manchester, of course, was almost as much her special country as Liverpool; the *Guardian's* very great editor, C. P. Scott, had no passion for Mr. Chamberlain; and her imperialism was of a kind to command his sympathy. The *Westminster Gazette*, recognising how difficult a thing she achieved in gaining public hearing for such topics as she handled, asked the question, why was she so much read, and answered very wisely: "The secret simply is that Miss Kingsley expresses everything in terms of humanity." Yet it was by no means only from Liberal quarters that her backing came. The *Morning Post*, as has been seen, had given her the run of its columns to explain her views, and now of course encouraged her. The *St. James's Gazette*, then edited by the stalwart Tory who is now Lord Cushendun, expressed itself in the fullest agreement with her "cursing of the Crown Colony and all its works." After some discussion of her proposals—and after recognition that they conformed broadly to Sir George Goldie's statesmanship—it concluded:

It will be impossible for the Colonial Office to disregard the warning given. If he deliberately allows the objectionable features of the present system to continue, Mr. Chamberlain will be preparing for a not far distant successor the troubles he is himself face to face with in the West Indies.

On the question of the hut-tax, the *Spectator* admitted that if in truth direct taxation, when imposed on African

communities which had voluntarily accepted a protectorate, was felt as an act of confiscation, other methods must be adopted. This was far removed from the attitude toward the African which had been shown in the same paper two years earlier. But in those two years Mary Kingsley had made friends with St. Loe Strachey, as a series of letters shall show. They refer, amongst other subjects, to part of her scheme which proposed to substitute for the existing system of customs due at the African ports one of collection before the ship sailed—and thus to avoid waste of life.

32, *St. Mary Abbott's Terrace.*

DEAR MR. STRACHEY,

I know I have to thank you for the review of W.A.S. in this week's *Spectator* because "what strikes us most is the absence of all connection between virtue and a devotion to religion." When, Sir, I urged you to give more attention to religious subjects I did not mean that you were to come down on me. I wanted you to flatten out someone else—the Pope or Mr. Kensit—but seriously I am very grateful to you for having taken the trouble to read the book at all and for then writing so tolerantly about it. I know every line I write must be an outrage on your critical taste and politically be abominable. I have but one remonstrance to make with what you say. I am not going to write to you about it officially. You say: "As his virtue does not depend on his religion, there is no fear that by taking away his faith in what he does believe we shall be sapping his principles of conduct." Everything I have written against taking away the African's faith has been because so doing just exactly does do this thing, and I in my foggy way have tried to show why it does. The connection between virtue and religion has nothing to do with it. The connection is between virtue and fear. Take away fear and your African is off down the Primrose path. I don't fancy this is confined to Africans, but I won't drag you into this now.

What I want your Majesty to do is to read a short book just out called *In the Niger Country* by Harold Bindloss. He is not a friend of mine. My cap frills are vibrating with fury about what he says about Mangrove Swamps and traders and negroes, but you just read it. He has been there, as far as I can make out, in some official capacity on a ship, probably several trips and has therefore had a lot of men through his hands and heard what

they have had to say, but it's the death rate I want you to read of and to realise, then you will, I know, sympathise with my horror at sending men out to do unnecessary work. Look at his death list in Gold Coast officials. There can be only one branch of service on the Gold Coast that has so many men to die and that branch of the Service is the Secretariat. I see you will have none of my system of collecting customs in Europe. I pray you think out some other way in which it can be done for it is worth doing; it's *customs* men die for in West Africa more than other administrative things. They would not die collecting customs here. You have no idea how limited are the number of European ports from which ships leave Europe for West Africa. It must be practicable to take your money this end, not by my way very likely, but by some way. The whole of that scheme of mine is just put there, as well as I could in the space, to prevent anyone saying the same old thing that I have heard till I am sick of it, "There is nothing for undeveloped regions but Chartered Companies or the Crown colony system." God help us if there isn't, for it means a smash in the tropics.

You say some very kindly things about its being possible for me to be of help, etc. I will always do my best to help through you when you will be bothered with me, but I am down off the fence in the seclusion of private life. In the gentle course of private friendship I shall do my best, in language worse than you have ever heard from me, to weld my men together and I'll fight to the last shot in my locker till "every stick smack smooth be smit" against the existing system. I know I have no chance against it now, but "ask after me to-morrow." When evil has been done, no man can undo.

I am not going for the Congo Free State or against it until I have been through it personally. Some men say the row there is the overflow from our disgracefully managed Uganda, others that Germany is avenging Stokes. Others, it is the conduct of the Congo Free State Officials. I say nothing, save that I am yours gratefully.

M. H. KINGSLEY.

5.2.99.

32, *St. Mary Abbott's Terrace.*

MY DEAR MR. STRACHEY,

Thank you very much indeed. Believe me, I *am* grateful. My opinion on my style is fixed, but I do not wish everyone to share it. The only thing that worries me is that it is not sufficiently clear. My only way of approaching clearness of expression or

description is via diffuseness. I can see myself attaining perfect clearness in two full-sized folio volumes, but Macmillan says *he* quite understands what I mean in the size he gives me. I suspect Macm. of being stingy about printer's ink in the matter, but he says it is not that at all and that he has sold 1200 copies of "West African Studies" during the past week, and that it is a good world take it all round. So I will not worry further about style, and after all, have I not had paid to me by a reviewer in a distant provincial paper more than a year ago the greatest compliment yet paid to a modern writer? I had quoted "The moving moon went up the sky and nowhere did abide, softly she was going up with a star or two beside," and the reviewer sternly quoted it and said "After this we should advise Miss Kingsley not to attempt verse again; her prose is readable."

8.2.99.

*Oaklands, Liverpool.*

MY DEAR MR. STRACHEY,

I am very grateful to you for your kind letter about my speech at Manchester. It has been a most trying affair. I of course wanted to quietly write the thing out in London and worry you with it, just give it and finish. I found this was quite impossible, conflicting counsels raged among my Liverpool and Manchester men, till I felt it was impossible for me to know where they were until I saw them and had a talk over with them. For it is no mortal use starting out on an expedition of this sort and leaving your followers behind you fighting in camp. So I went down to Manchester on Thursday and some of the Liverpool headmen came over that night and we had it out—palaver finished about 12.45 a.m.—and then I went to my room and wrote the thing out and gave it them at three the following day. As I could not submit it to you, I left out the Free Trade part of it in public and set myself to find out what they thought of the countervailing duty question in private. Of course they were furious about it, but what can they do in their scandalously disorganised state? Nothing!

It takes going to these big towns and pottering about them, listening quietly, to realise how unrepresentative our so-called representative government is. The means by which these trade lords can make their opinion known are now so clumsy, so roundabout and so on, that the busiest and the best and most representative men among them have not got the time to give to using them. Moreover, many of the present ways are dark and bad, and the good men won't use them, won't cringe and bribe; they leave

that to the bulldozers, and the present system mistakes these bulldozers for representative men, to the harm of English interests, while the men whom it should represent, the men I believe it really wants to represent, just damn it and attend to business. It is a very queer thing for a so-called commercial nation, and I'll be hanged if I think it is a good thing : all this escape of steam and loose working at the joints. You should just hear these men on the system of commercial consuls nominated by the government, it would take the paint off the conceit of the advocates of this method of improving England's commerce. It is very much a case of " they talks a lot of loving, but what do they understand ? " What we want is a honest, open system of representing commercial opinion in the government. I believe the more I know of it that it is an opinion worth having, and a sound healthy kindly opinion, no disgrace to England, and I believe Imperialism without it is rotten folly. I had a long talk with York Powell over it some time back, and he pointed out that when the reorganisation of the *Constitution* took place at the *Restoration* the religious and the territorial interests got their representation. The trade interest did not. It was a powerful interest, and it grew on alone very little hindered or aided by government. This of course did very well for a time, but now our own government has become in England so powerful that it can hold in the trade interest; trade interest suffers and must suffer more and more. This seems to me bad, for after all trade is our bread and butter. But I must not bother you more now. I should like a talk with you over it when I get back and you can spare the time. I fear we shall have to wait for a bigger statesman than Joe, but I am sorry to think it. I should have liked that man to have written up his name well on English history, but he is a one man show—excellent while he lasts alive. But not a Bismarck or an Oliver Cromwell—not a permanent institution, in fact; and even excellent as he is in intention he cannot work successfully with his present tool, the Crown Colony system, the system that is between him and the work he has to do. In fact he has got the wrong tool.

Gratefully,

M. H. KINGSLEY.

19.3.99.

Another friendship on the Press—of a very different kind—began at this time. She had of course seen and noted the various articles on African subjects signed E.D.M., but without knowing who the writer was.

There appeared in the *Daily Chronicle* a notice of *West African Studies*, unsigned, which she read with pleasure; but it was another article on "the reckless expenditure of our West African administration," which moved her to write personally to its unknown author, E. D. Morel :—

I have done my best to fight for the prosperity of West Africa since I last came home. I have fought the humbug of the anti-liquor traffic. I have fought the hut-tax when I might have let these things slide and gained respect and honour from the powerful section of the community and generally been popular in fashionable circles; and public help from those towns I fought for, Liverpool and Manchester I have not had, with the one exception of Mr. John Holt, who faced the London press in the *Spectator* on the hut-tax war until your communication to the *Chronicle*. . . .

I have not the honour of any personal acquaintance with the staff of the *Chronicle*, but have many times been very grateful to it, and especially grateful am I now when this fight on excessive expenditure is going to be a very heavy one—because it is against a powerful mass of public opinion in London.

He replied, of course, disclosing his identity, and she wrote back in ardent praise of his work, expressing her delight that she should be praised by E.D.M. Writing now in all frankness of intimacy, she pours out her complaint.

. . . We both know what an uphill fight it is to interest the general public in West Africa or anywhere else overseas. Australians, Canadians and Indian officials all say the same thing, that general public opinion on colonial politics does not exist in England, and so things are in the hands of the permanent officials at the F.O. and C.O. offices, not in the hands of the Foreign or Colonial Ministers, except on those rare occasions, like the present with Chamberlain, when we have a strong man in power, and then he has only permanent official information tempered by Press opinion to go on. The permanent official, as you know, hates the Press. It likes to feel it knows more than anyone else and wraps in mystery things any man might know, while at the same time it so guards its really important secrets that foreign diplomats find them out, as has occurred in this China affair. And I feel sure if Chamberlain goes and gets sick of the results of his interference, the Permanent Official will rule again, and things at the C.O. will sink back

into the status quo ante like they did at the F.O. after Palmerston. Or, in other words, unless you break the power of the Permanent Official and substitute for it another permanent institution founded on expert trade—and scientific knowledge, you will get no advance in tropical regions which must be governed from England because of their local unhealthiness. You cannot depend on the Minister. He is an ephemeral thing.

This correspondence lasted through the rest of her life, because she had found here the journalist she needed for an ally, one who could write effectively—she put his gift very high—and who, though he had not actually been in Africa, lived in the centre of West African affairs; for he was on the staff of Sir Alfred Jones in Liverpool. In letter after letter she is busy with suggestions as to where he might write, what he might write on; she sends him information from her own inside sources, she offers him introductions to editors at discretion—in a word, she is bent on helping, partly out of natural kindness, for he was then a struggling journalist, but chiefly—and it was the best part of her friendship to make him feel this—because he could serve her cause, because for him West African affairs were the main object of attention. I print, with a wry face, an allusion to “the man the *Spectator* has on for Africa.” “He is a *very* nice man, though he is not always nice to me, and he cares just as much for Tennyson as for Africa, and he has written a novel, a thing I am sure you and I never dream of doing.”

Indeed, when I wrote about Africa I wrote of things of which I knew very little, and I gave only a passing attention to them. It was very different with Morel. If anyone may be said to have carried on Mary Kingsley's work as a propagandist, defending the right of negro peoples to justice, it is he; and it was not with impunity, for he made powerful enemies; but his friend would have seen with triumph the harvest of his life. No one could have guessed then that when the first Labour Government came to be formed in England, he would

be a part of it, as Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs. But that is not his true title to remembrance. After Mary Kingsley's death, he saw with delight many of the principles for which she had contended carried out in British administration; but he saw the worst evils and injustices inflicted by the only European administration in Africa for which she never said a good word; and he fought it and fought them. When the Congo Free State's evil existence was ended, by the general action of Europe, three men in the English-speaking world could claim a chief part in its overthrow: Roger Casement, Sir Charles Dilke and Morel.

There is no doubt but her friendship was a lasting inspiration to Morel; we have his word for it, in the Foreword to his *Affairs in West Africa*.

Few women are able, as Mary Kingsley was able, to draw forth by the magic of her earnest personality, the best of a man. The least of those to whom she extended the privilege of her friendship were always welcome, and never failed to secure her presence without feeling that her words of sympathy and encouragement were a fresh incentive to push onward, never losing hope and fortified against disappointment. The truest, kindest, staunchest friend that ever breathed, such was Mary Kingsley.

But at this period, nearly everyone who had to do with West African affairs came into the circle of her acquaintance—and more than one, into that of her friendship. Here is a puzzled letter from the very gallant simple-minded gentleman who was not allowed to save Moshi for the British Empire. Major Northcott was home on leave, and evidently she sent him her volume to look through before he returned to his commissioner-ship in the Gold Coast hinterland. He wrote:

DEAR MISS KINGSLEY,

I have now read your book with much pleasure and profit, but there are just one or two things in it that I do not understand, and as they closely affect the unfortunate people whom I am deputed to administer, I should be really grateful if you could spare time to enlighten me. You are particularly severe upon



those individuals who, in defiance of the teachings—the obvious teachings—of ethnology advocate direct taxation of non-Mahomedan peoples. Now, to my shame, my knowledge of 'ologies does not extend beyond rather uncertain attempts at spelling them, and I am one of those hopeless imbeciles crushed by your remorseless Nasmyth who advocate direct taxation of Pagans, and I want to know, please, why not? I am most willing to learn, but you will forgive me, I know, if I don't at once accept a Delphic utterance with classical respect, and I should be really grateful to hear some human, man-in-the-street explanation of this obiter dictum of yours. I hate writing, and so perhaps if you are in town next week you would be so very kind as to let me know whether I might call on you and fight the matter out.

I should not venture to make such a request if I did not know that we were both interested in the progress of the uncivilised native of West Africa.

Believe me,

Sincerely yours,

HENRY P. NORTHCOTT.

Northcott went back to the Gold Coast, but not to stay there: before that year was out, the war in South Africa called him and a Boer bullet ended this gallant gentleman. Mary Kingsley wrote to me: "Poor Northcott, the tragedy of his life was, not being killed at the Modder River, but betraying Bokary, a black." It is evident that he and she had agreed upon what was simplest in her faith—the prime necessity that a great Power should keep its pledged word, and the more necessary if that word had been given to the weaker, to the less civilised, to those who could understand one thing only completely—honour in a pledge.

That letter to me was written a year later, when a more engrossing African issue had swept thoughts of the West Coast from the public mind and when she was very unhappy. But in these early months of 1899 her unhappiness had begun, for she began to see that though the man whom Mr. Chamberlain for the British Government had called in to give judgment on the issues in Sierra Leone was giving judgment in agreement with

her own, there was little likelihood that such results as she desired would follow. In a word, justice, as she saw it, would not be done. A letter to me tells something of her feelings when she wrote on February 16. It begins as usual with chaff; for she had come down in print on something I had written anonymously, and manifestly I had avowed this and apologised and defended myself:—

Oh Hevins was that you ! I thought it was E.D.M. at it again. Shade of my dear dead friend—but I will not go into details, he was *the* purser. I apologise, you were right, I am entirely Irish, and I do believe I am the one and only Irishman left in a desolate world. I will take out a patent for myself. Here I am just like that well-known man who hit at heads through a tent-sheet—they look so tempting—and then I find it is the head of the last person in the world I would have said anything harsh to.

But seriously, Mr. Gwynn—do not go and think me sensitive about anything I publish, or you will drop me, give me up as a puzzle not worth solving or bothering with—and you are the only person I know who so far has shown signs of understanding me underneath in this African affair, and I do work so hard to be fair and clear and I so very rarely succeed in making myself either. Nor do you, I pray, rush into the other extreme and think I have no feelings at all. I have plenty, but I keep them out of print just as I keep them out of almost all my conduct and hide them from the eyes of almost everyone I know. There are not more than three people in all whom I dare let see them, for they are savage things that would make people, who have not got that sort of feeling inside them, shrink from me. There ! That is the reason why I am what so many people call “elusive.” When I am “elusive” I know it and it is malice aforethought.

There is only one man connected with this W.A. affair who knows me and what I think entirely about it. That man is Sir George Goldie, and I know he thinks me a devil. We had a talk the other night concerning justice in the abstract and the meaning of pain and misery, and we found that, for all our seeming surface agreement, in underneath things we were absolutely different; and the humour of the thing was he was the gentle-minded merciful one. But I must not worry you with this; it is only my way of being grateful. I am very lonely and worried in this Africa affair and I care about it bitterly, but not about what

I have written on it, for I know that is not good enough, and I feel I damage a good cause by my vain attempts to give an absolutely fair just picture of the thing as it is.

But the rest of that letter announces the opening of a friendship which was, I think, to mean more than any other to her for the rest of her life. She asked me to come a day or two later and meet one or two people—including "a warrior from the War Office who is down on me on taxation." Then she went on, with her habitual mixture of jest and earnest, to say why she was likely to find him congenial.

We may be an improving spectacle, but you must not expect rows, for I dote on the military and have a weakness for the Nation—Israel. If the Irish throw me over I shall retire for solace and consolation and rest into the Society of Jews. But I am not a Jew. Their attraction for me is in their dreamy minds, their hard common sense and their love for beautiful material objects. It is just really the same thing that makes me love African society. I was dining last night with Sir Samuel Montagu and with three or four Jews, and I had the same pleasure in feeling his silver and china and gloating generally over them. The other Goyim, save the mark, thought it vulgar.

But when Major Nathan came that February afternoon, he brought news that was certain to fire her interest in him; for he had that very day received orders to go to Sierra Leone and take charge of the administration. Government, having seen Sir David Chalmers' report, had decided that it was too damning to appear without a statement in answer, and Sir Frederick Cardew was being called home to prepare a vindication which should appear along with it.

Major Nathan had previously served in Sierra Leone as an engineer officer; he knew the climate and its chances; also, it was manifest to anyone how difficult a task it was to pacify a colony still seething with revolt that had been produced by a sense of injustice and oppression. Nothing could appeal more strongly to Mary Kingsley's imagination than the acceptance of such a

mission, and it was natural to her generosity that she should admire the man who undertook it. But even when the appeal to her sympathy was far less strong, her response was almost startling in its vehemence. For instance, there was in those days a certain young man writing occasionally for the Press, amongst other things on West African affairs. She met him, came to know that he was being headed rather unwillingly towards work in a London solicitor's office, and through her influence he got the offer to go to Nigeria as private secretary to Lugard. It was a chance that made the beginning of a successful career in administration, and by all standards he was her debtor. Yet when he decided to accept she wrote to him: "Remember I am your slave." That was how she felt to anyone who cared to take useful service in a climate whose dangers she knew so well.

Major Nathan knew them as well as she, so that in his case the appeal to her imagination was more than doubled. Moreover, the loneliness that she had spoken of to me, the sense of being misunderstood, made her seek friendship with one whose task, in the first place, made him share her besetting preoccupation. How quickly that friendship grew, to the honour of both, is clear from what she wrote to him less than three weeks after their meeting, when he was on the eve of departure.

*32, St. Mary Abbotts Terrace, Kensington.*

Private.

DEAR MAJOR NATHAN,

I have had a sort of toothache in what flatterers call my mind but which I call my temper, since you were here on Sunday—You gave it to me by two things you said. It has not been forgetfulness nor indifference that has prevented my writing to you sooner, but just a despairing feeling that I cannot make you understand. As a general rule it is a matter of simply no importance whether anyone, from Joc Chamberlain to the dustman, understands me or no, but you are the exception, and I suppose, with the irony of fate, you don't care a row of pins about understanding me, while the others downright worry trying to do it.

Well—to return to those two things you said that hurt me and that I shall not forget. Sir, if you think that for one moment I did anything to cause trouble in Sierra Leone you are mistaken. I can honestly say that every ounce of my influence up here has been fiercely and fearlessly employed in attempting to save the reputations and careers of the English officers who were forced to collect the hut-tax. If it had not been for me every fact and fiction that could have been paraded in the Press against those men would have been paraded, and mud sticks. My party are savage men. They are all white men—Englishmen—but that don't get in their way when they are out on the rampage, as you will know if you have studied the Niger Company question. I make no pretence at being able to rule my Pappenheimers; but they will listen to me, because I am a woman—more than they will to others. They will take abuse from me that coming from another would mean slaughter—but, Sir, it is no more fair to hold me responsible for the goings on of my gallant band—the traders—than it would be to hold the female patron saint of a band of brigands responsible for that band's going on. I try to *lead* these men with a palm branch—but two-thirds of my time I am rushing about a difficult country trying to drive them off some little game and using the palm branch like a switch. The poor thing is pretty well worn out by now, I assure you.

Well, in that Sierra Leone affair they as aforesaid were for a personal policy of attack. I said No, go for the rotten system that makes such a thing possible. But they have left fighting the government to me, and I have hit it as hard as I can and have not done yet—but I never have, and I never will, hit you great Englishmen who go down into deadly West Africa and do your best for it, and because you are you, keep that damned crown colony system on its legs: were you weak men or bad, the thing would have collapsed years ago.

I have gone for the hut-tax also on its own merits. I was brought up under the teaching of Sir Henry Maine and a group of great lawyers, and I have worked on savage and early law for years, and know what that hut-tax means to the native, namely confiscation of the thing taxed—and as an ordinary Englishwoman I do not like to see England's honour dragged in the dirt before a lot of black men. We made treaties and agreements with those people on the understanding we would not take their land or property from them—and then we do it. I loathe a breach of faith—it don't matter whether it is with a black man or a black beetle. The thing is an affair of our own honour. You are a soldier and a gentleman and you will understand. I cannot expect

civilians to understand. I have to translate the thing for them into terms of sentiment or profit and loss. Briefly, Sir, I know that that hut-tax was, in its little way, just what the greased cartridge was in the Indian Mutiny. Of course those people ought not to object to direct taxation and all the other blessings of civilisation, but when we have said we don't mean to confiscate their property we ought not to confiscate it. I come of a pretty bad tribe. Slavers, Slave-owners, &c., but we had and have two virtues that in my eyes make us better than the Exeter Hall crew—though we were never in a hurry to tie ourselves up to virtue and we did not cant. I, Sir, have a very lively hatred for those armchair fools who sit up here and play the cat and banjo with Africa and call the performance “civilising the African and spreading Christianity.” But I have nothing but respect for you. I would no more do a thing to hamper or worry you than I would dream of flying. I am capable of making the Colonial Office's flesh creep whenever I get half a chance, so that if there is ever anything that the C.O. does that you do not want tortured, you let me know and I'll cry hands off with it. I should like to see you again before you go, but I dare not ask it, for your time must be so precious to your own people now, and so, Sir, sincerely wishing you all prosperity, honour and success and good health

I remain,

Yours very truly,

MARY H. KINGSLEY.

8.3.99.

She was wrought up to a pitch of which I see no trace elsewhere in her letters when she wrote that: finding herself alone in what seemed to her a fight for justice that was to be denied, and for the honour of her nation which she felt tarnished. So again, a week later she poured out her soul to this man whom she admired and trusted, passionate that he should understand, yet apologising almost extravagantly for having inflicted letters on him; but trying to make him understand that he was to her a sort of tribunal to which she desired to justify her conduct.

She spoke of the traders, the roughest of them, whom she described in a passage that has been quoted already.<sup>1</sup> They mattered to her:

<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, p. 49.

I like them and am not afraid of them. There are men up here I like, but am not afraid of, the Rt. Honble. Joe and Mr. Antrobus<sup>1</sup>—dozens more—including A. L. Jones. Then there are a little group of men I am afraid of in a scientific way. They depend on me and trust me and I could not cheat them and live happy—Tylor, Günther, Kohn, and Sir Alfred Lyall and Sir Frederick Pollock; but apart from their trust in me I do not care; and then there is you and Sir George Goldie, who don't trust me, but who whether you do or no, I must be able to face clean-handed. It would be so much easier to be cheaply cruel and cowardly, so much easier to lie by silent and save people's feelings, things it hurts me to hurt. But if I did it once, I could not look you in the face again, and I must be able to—it is the only thing worth having living or dead. I have never done one thing in my life I cannot face you with. I never shall. If you did not trust I should not be dishonourable, I should be just hard and I should not care. There is no mortal reason why you should care one way or the other what I am. Sir George Goldie has to tolerate me because his wife loved me and he loved her and loves her. You have no such link, so I explain to you—but not to him. I am of no account to you and I know it. I don't revel in it, or I should not write to you thus. I am of account to these people up here. I have five letters this morning and a newspaper from Liverpool. I send the latter on—saying the new Governor has been seen and describing you personally—most awful waste of time—and they ask me if I have heard of you. How in the world is it likely I should know an English governor? I called in on the Montagus, which I ought to have done before—and found Lady Montagu, who is an angel, persecuted by devils in the form of servants. This time it was the cook with a pain in his inside—hysterics outside in equal parts and Lady M. worrying herself to a shamrock over both phenomena. She seemed to think you had caught West Africa off me like a disease. She said it "was very unhealthy," and I met some of your relations at Sir William Crookes's last week, very proud of you, but anxious, as well they may be both. They gave me a criminal feeling of responsibility for the climate. Allah send it treats you well. It would if I had power. I ought not to have said that to you about missionaries, but in common fairness you must make allowances for one whose ancestors were Slavers, whose ancestors have been abused up hill and down dale by these microbes who are being every bit

<sup>1</sup> Now Sir Reginald Antrobus, K.C.B., then head of the West African Department at the Colonial Office.

as cruel and had themselves and who get admired for it, and called civilisers. *They* never civilised an African. We did—by the thousand, built up the Southern States on them. These people have built up the Congo Free State. I hope they like it at night and when they are ill. I never was thinking of you when I said it, as one of those proud people who look down on all of us, on missionaries, nigs and me. Well, Ave Caesar. God keep you well and happy. I am off to fight beasts at Ephesus for men's lives and England's honour. Some day forgive me boring you with this and remember as kindly as you can that melancholy thing that will always serve and fear you.

M. H. KINGSLEY.

12.3.99.

Women incline to take politics tragically, and Mary Kingsley was no exception; but she was unlike the others in always retaining the power to realise that her opponents might be honest, and even likeable. As Major Nathan went out to Sierra Leone he crossed the man whom he was to replace; and within a fortnight the originator of the hut-tax was knocking at Mary Kingsley's door. She recounted it to Morel:

. . . I have been having a tiresome time of it in politics latterly. Sir Frederick Cardew wrote to me and said he wanted to have a talk with me, as he knew I had heard the other side. I said I was much obliged to him but, really, it did not matter what I heard. I had said my say and I did not want to nag about the hut-tax. I disagree with it on principle. From my point of view the amount of the tax and the massacres connected with it did not affect the case, which was that England had promised those Africans to respect their country, law and their private property. By putting on the hut-tax, she disgraced herself, whether it paid her to do it, whether the tax was easy to collect or no. He, however, returned to the charge, and the consequence has been I have spent most of my spare time in his society instead of in that of Sir George Goldie. Nice company I keep, you will say in any case. Well, Cardew's point of view is this. That that tax will be a benefit to the Africans, as it will introduce among them regular industry. I need not comment upon this point of view to you, but, mind you, this view is one that will commend itself to Chamberlain, and I believe, now that the Chambers of Liverpool and Manchester have put themselves out of the game



by agreeing to the hut-tax, that the hut-tax will be put on in all our African possessions. It has been put on under the municipalities on the Gold Coast and it has been, thanks to the admirable tact of Clark, successfully collected. It will go on in the hinterland and it will go on in Lagos as shure as God made little apples, and then we shall have thrown away all our prestige in West Africa with the natives. Yet Brutus is an honourable man: Cardew, I mean, and I do not abuse him. I quite see his position, and I do not know that I will abuse Joe. What is he to do? He does not know the thing himself; he must shape his policy on information from men who do know. On the one hand there is Cardew, who has travelled extensively in the hinterland. Cardew sticks to his point and says it will elevate the African in the plane of civilisation and provide a firm, full revenue. Also he says all the opposition to the tax, except that small part of it he is good enough to credit to me, was an opposition by short-sighted traders made on account of a belief that their trade would suffer. Now that they find that it has not suffered, but increased trade, their opposition is withdrawn.

Thus, for all her native good humour, her heart grew bitter. Summer came and the Chalmers' Report still did not appear; acquaintances in the House of Commons told her that this was done with a tactical intention of holding up the documents till Parliament had adjourned, and she realised that no effective opposition to the hut-tax had been created. On July 28, 1899, a long letter from her was published in the *Pall Mall Gazette* by way of a rejoinder to an article from E.D.M. which had speculated "on the state of her feelings towards the Chambers of Liverpool and Manchester after their recent action."

"I own," she says, "that your contributor is in a measure right in surmising that the way in which the opposition of the Chalmers' report collapsed over the hut-tax which they had at the time of its imposition so strenuously opposed was a blow to me; but my feelings were never 'sorrowful'; they were otherwise. . . . I am used to this sort of thing, used to finding myself rather lonely when a fight is on, and well provided with companions when it comes to a triumphal procession. I take it like the weather, and it produces little radical change in my feelings

towards any man or any institution, for I recognise that this generation likes a whole skin, which it calls Peace. I know I am antiquated and do not understand it, so do not attempt to judge it. I myself, setting no value on Peace so long as there is anything worth fighting for on the horizon, beg to be allowed to grasp this opportunity of having a battle with your contributor E.D.M."

Then, under a thin disguise, she proceeds to pay public tribute to Morel's exceptional knowledge of West African affairs. After this service to her friend, she remonstrates with him for willingness to see the Niger Company swept away. He and she had agreed about the hut-tax, which the Colonial Office had imposed :

In my eyes it does not matter what the amount of that tax was. It does not matter what good use you were going to make of the money. It does not matter whether the natives of West Africa are black, white, cherry-colour or pea-green. It is your given word of honour that matters. England's word of honour must be kept, let it cost her what it may, let it be given where it may, even be it on the plains of hell itself to devils. Under the rule of the representative Bureau, that word of honour has been broken. Therefore, I am not glad to see a larger and more difficult region to rule, the Niger territories, handed over to it, though I know the Bureau would not have done this hut-tax thing had it known what it was doing. Does E.D.M. think the Bureau knows more about Nigeria than it does about a colony it has so long had under its sway? Why is he glad to see those regions taken out of the hands of an amalgamation of traders, who added it to our Empire, and placed under the Bureau that has had to resort to the hut-tax in Sierra Leone, and a Forced Labour ordinance on the Gold Coast? The Royal Niger Company was never forced by fiscal pressure to these things : it did without them and paid into the bargain. Its one great fault was its exclusion of traders who were not in the amalgamation. But are any traders at all represented in the Bureau?

Later, she wrote to Morel :—

I know you think badly of those traders. I daresay that a good deal of what you say against them for their poor-spiritedness up here is justified; but up here is only part of their affair. I am glad John Holt spoke out. He is a very fine man—the one man

in ten that would in my mind save Sodom and Gomorrha. But there are plenty more, only they have not his power of thought and expression. They can only swear.

She says in another letter :—

. . . I regard Mr. Holt as my political leader, and am a nice nuisance to him; but I absolutely trust him, and I know the educated Africans look on him as the only man they can rely on. I know that the white men on the coast say you can tell Holt anything, and if you tell him not to let out who told, then he don't.

Eventually at the end of July the Report did appear, with Cardew's reply and a despatch from Chamberlain summing up. One or two of Chalmers' recommendations were adopted; the hut-tax was extended to the colony as well as the protectorate; the native police force was to be brought under better organisation and discipline. But Chalmers had advised the withdrawal of the tax; Mr. Chamberlain was resolute for keeping it on. Singularly enough, the evidence supporting Sir Frederick Cardew's reply was included in the blue book; that given before Sir David Chalmers was withheld for separate and later publication. And unhappily Sir David Chalmers died on the very day when the matter was discussed in Parliament. That was on August 7th, only two or three days before the regular session ended. It was not left for an Irishman to raise; Mr. Hedderwick, the member for Wick, did this in a long speech, of whose tone Mr. Chamberlain had no complaint to make. Nor were his references to Mary Kingsley lacking in respect; but he said her opinion that direct taxation of the kind was specially resented by African natives was not borne out by other travellers in the country. He justified his view by the fact that a hut-tax was collected without difficulty in the Gambia and in French Guinea. On these points Mary Kingsley's answer, supplied to Morel, was that in the Gambia, a strip of territory only a few miles deep on each side of

a navigable river, administration could make resistance impossible by an afternoon excursion with a gunboat; and that in French Guinea native institutions were largely modified by Moorish admixture.

But the details are unimportant, except as showing that she had carefully investigated every aspect of the matter. The case was concluded: Rome had spoken. She wrote to Strachey:—

"Now that Act I of the hut-tax in West Africa has closed, I feel I must thank you for the great personal help you have been to me throughout my first encounter with politics. I cannot help feeling, after Mr. Chamberlain's reference to me, that I have come out better than could have been expected. Here am I completely backed up by a staid old Scotch lawyer of great experience, and erudition only less sensational than he is, and I feel I can still speak to Mr. Chamberlain, though he has chosen to adopt the advocates of the status quo in West Africa. He'll get a sickener of it, and then he will know that just as it was wise of him to call in the aid of medical science there for imperial reasons, so would it have been wise for him in this last tax affair to have taken the opinion of anthropology in the question of local administration there; even though the person who spoke for anthropology was only a woman and the others were military men whose conduct had already upset the apple-cart.

But there is far more of her real mind in a letter to Major Nathan written at the same time, which ranges over the whole of her preoccupations—chief among which was the affectionate delight at her friend's success that the chaff so thinly veils.

DEAR MAJOR NATHAN,

I ought to have answered your first kind letter in re Major Ross, but I have been ill. It is unnecessary to remark the Doctor said "influenza." Now I have another note from you, an immense relief to me, for your first one made me anxious. You also seem to have sent a similar letter to Mr. Jones, for he proudly told me he had heard from you, "So have I, Mr. Jones," said I, "I *do* hope Major Ross won't go on the bust, marry a Colonial nurse, or take up with those missionaries." "Goodness! Miss Kingsley!" says the horrified A. L. "Major Ross is a most steady man, scientific man, they are *all* steady scientific men."

I cautiously said, "You never knew how those steady men turned out when they got to West Africa, and that if it came to my ears you were coming home, rampant, about the Liverpool scientific expedition, I should emigrate and leave its godfathers, A. L. and Mr. Chamberlain, to receive your wrath *alone*. I am glad you have taken to Flies (Mr. Austen). I always liked him. They usually keep him in the basement of the British Museum in Cromwell Road, and I have seen him when I have been pottering about there after Hemoptera, Mr. Kirby, or Beetles, Dr. Waterhouse." They have another very superior person in the basement, Spiders (Mr. Pocock): I really think I shall suggest Spiders is sent out to amuse you. One might work it in as science, somehow and Major Ross's telegram, plus A. L.'s editing, caused roars of laughter about Major Ross holding down the mosquito that he had caught until "more men" arrived, as the *Pall Mall* put it. Spiders in that connection might be useful. I don't think Hemoptera or Beetles would amuse you. Major Ross<sup>1</sup> personally I know very little of, but as aforesaid I am glad they are all being quiet and good and bringing no discredit on their three sponsors and have caught something else but their own deaths from fever. Well, you ask what more I want, Sir. I would like to know what you mean by fascinating my Chambers of Commerce—just when I was making up my mind that I was safely in possession of their affections because there was no one else they could care for on the horizon, if you please, I find, suddenly, and after they have done it, they have been writing to the Colonial Office praying that you may not be taken from them but kept at Sierra Leone. They don't want Cardew. They want *you*, you always. My nose is out of joint completely, and to think of its being a governor, and a military man at that. Oh, Liverpool and Manchester, that I should live to see this after all you have told me about Governors and military men being the very *last* creatures you could ever care for!

I expect the next quarter I shall find I am cut out in will be native chiefs. I think it is high time you came home and Cardew returned. He will never supplant me with Chambers of Commerce or Sir Robert, or Blackies—*never*.

I have seen a good deal of Sir Frederick Cardew latterly. I really like him. I think him utterly misguided, and I need not tell you I tell him so, and the worst of it is he seems to like being

<sup>1</sup> Now Sir Ronald Ross and world-famous. He carried a letter of introduction from Mary Kingsley when he went to continue his researches on the West Coast.

thoroughly blown up. I fancy he, being a sort of Rival Christian, regards me as Lions, and so thinks I shall, unwittingly and unintentionally, provide him with a halo in the T'o Come. He is just the sort of man who would have enjoyed the floor of the Coliseum on a gala night. Now and then he stands up and makes a fight for it. The last time he was in London he called on me and discoursed on the heat at Falmouth, where, as you know, they have had a home this summer. Then, in a perfectly masterly way, about South Africa and the last Boer War! then he came down on me suddenly on the hut-tax war, which he had meant to do all the time, and he told me many things which exculpated him in my eyes from much blame. Finally he wound up by asking me how I could sort of reconcile it—my saying he did not know the natives and his having travelled so extensively about the hinterland of the Colony. Well, I could only reconcile it by using analogies. The one I did not use was the obvious one of the policemen who live daily in the Assyrian galleries of the British Museum at Bloomsbury and could not for the life of them read one line of the perfectly readable inscriptions. But still I like Sir Frederick Cardew. It is my melancholy fate to like so many people I profoundly disagree with and to often heartily dislike people who agree with me.

I have had another correspondence with Chamberlain descend on me. He began it with a civil kind note after the debate on Chalmers' report—and it is plain he means to have the last word. The whole of that Chalmers report affair is very curious—very unsatisfactory. I still feel that it had better not have been published at all than published in the way it was. I have no objection to autocratic measures; far from it, I believe an autocracy is the right form of government for the tropics. I have no objection to artfulness when it rises to the level of statecraft, but in this matter the level reached is mere vestry artfulness. The first part, as it is called, of the Blue Book is published and issued to the public and to the M.P.'s. The second part withheld. Everyone *knows* there is a second part and a something withheld. The *rest* of the parties interested in the affair are peopling that second part with horrors. I have had the complete thing in my hands and know—but it is no business of *mine* to smooth out the feelings of people adverse to that tax or interfere with it except on ethnological grounds.

You said in your first letter you wished I would attend to my business, the machinery of black thought. I will as soon as I can, as soon as my Brother relieves me from Domestic Duty by going off to China, but his preparations for that step seem endless.

He says he is going to China in December, and that is the only month I feel morally certain he will not go, but I expect he will be off before the spring. Then I go to the M'banghi.<sup>1</sup> But in the meantime I will impart to you, in *strict* confidence, for if it were known it would damage me badly, my opinion on the African; he is *not* "half devil and half child," any more than he is "our benighted Brother" and all that sort of thing. He is a woman, and I am certain old Herodotus's division of the human race into feminine and masculine peoples has more in it than meets the eye. Take the white races. Your Hebrew and Teuton are masculine races. Your French and Irish feminine. Take coloured races. Your Arab and Red Indian are masculine. Your true Negro and Melanesian feminine. You have outside these fused races old races going off the stage, like Polynesian, Greek, Australian and several forms of early American races. These are negligible quantities in practical politics. The races who are sharply masculine and sharply feminine are the people one has to deal with. Of course you may, as a masculine race, go and whack your wife and say it is impossible to understand women, but it don't make peace or prosperity in the home. It is much better to make her love you, never a difficult job; much better to keep the finances in your own hands and treat her to a new bonnet now and then, and let her look after the housework. She can do that better than you. But do you do it? No, you lower yourself by trying to manage the servants. You spend all the money on yourself. You leave her, the black chief, starving, humiliated before the servants when you go strutting about, showing *yourself* off with a lot of other men and foreign women, like France, and she who might have loved you gets to hate you, and she will put bush in your chop like Ireland has done. I know those nigs because I am a woman, a woman of a masculine race, but a woman still, and there is not one thought a black chief can think on any subject that I cannot, because of my race, think, and think clearer—but do not tell this to anyone, as my opinion. It is the secret my life depends on when I go back; it is the secret my influence among the French hangs on. I dare not trust it with anyone but you and Joe, who is, in spite of all, a man I trust, a man who if I could only speak well enough would understand.

Of course I can fight and am fighting for the same thing among my fellow Ethnologists, and winning easier battles with them than I

<sup>1</sup> A river in Congo Français which falls into the Congo, running from the direction of Lake Tchad. This meant exploration much farther inland than in her earlier journeys.

can win with you, for with them I can speak a known-to-both-language, and have only to make them throw their origin of the human race back and divide it into three or five stems, instead of one, a thing they are already inclined to do. Unfortunately among them I have just lost my valued ally Dr. Brinton, *the* great authority on the indigenous tribes of the American continent—he is dead.

Believe me, Major Nathan, the *wonderful* way you have soothed over that distracted colony and made all men connected with it love you I esteem as a great achievement—but who am I!

Only

Yours truly,

M. H. KINGSLEY.

28.8.99.

I add one more extract from a letter to the same friend written in December :—

I hope you did not think me flippanant over that Sierra Leone question. I know I am beaten on that West African thing. I am always beaten, but for all that I never submit. I will escort no personally conducted tours of Nigs to the plains of Hell : namely, I won't lift a finger to help Cardew and the Bishops of Sierra Leone and the brown colony system at large out of the mess it is in. You may laugh and think I couldn't, but you would be wrong, Sir. I have what no other white has just now—the entire confidence of the educated nig throughout West Africa—and I am getting on in America among nigs there. Do you think it would be any use my advertising this power in the *Exchange and Mart* for a garden roller? I want a garden roller and some other trifles. I don't want this power-thing at all, because my religion prevents me from using it : it's just like a beautiful Chinese dress Isabella<sup>1</sup> gave me at Christmas. I am dying to wear the thing, but I cannot. Oh! Major Nathan, if it is not too late, allow me respectfully to implore you never to have a narrow hard creed like I have. They are gay ill to live with. Oh, I do get so mortal sick of the W.A. affair. I like my traders and my nigs and do all my creed allows me to to help them, and it's not much of a return I can give them for all I owe them. When I think of the infinite toleration, chivalry and kindness they have both given me I feel bankrupt. They were both so very quaint, both really solid good stuff, but both getting more and more to hate and distrust the government in W.A., hate and distrust it in a fine broad general way when it deserves it or not.

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Bishop, the traveller.



## CHAPTER XII

### THE END OF THE STORY

IN the middle of all this preoccupation Mary Kingsley found time to produce two more books—though in one she was only partly the author. This was the long-projected memoir of her father, at which her brother had made desultory attempts from 1893 onward. Now, she made up her mind that if it were ever to be done, she must do it; and so she collected under the title "Notes on Sport and Travel" a number of her father's fugitive writings and wove them together with the personal narration and description from which I have quoted in the early chapters.

The other volume was a fresh contribution to her own subject, very different in bulk and stature from its predecessors. It was *The Story of West Africa*, published by Horace Marshall in what was called "The Story of the Empire" series: little volumes, sold for one and sixpence. She was influenced, as always, by the desire to get public attention for her neglected province; but I think also she was glad to help the large and impecunious young Scot, Mr. Hamish Hendry, who came to me asking me to persuade her into doing it. Anyhow, she did it, and it involved a deal of reading, most congenial to her, in the narratives of old adventurers and half-trading, half-buccaneering companies, from the days of Prince Henry the Navigator of Portugal down to those of Sir George Goldie, whose often-quoted passage about the necessary principles of white rule in Africa was quoted again here for the last word of the historical part. But I confine myself to what she says by way of introduction

to this "grimmiest of the Empire's stories" and to her final words.

She begins with her so often repeated comment on the tenacity of British merchants and the indifference of British statesmen:—

That England at home has not cared, you see written across the page of this history from the day when Edward IV held in the Bristol men, down to the present day; and that what Empire we have down there has been forced on the home authorities by the energy of the far-seeing merchants—not fostered by the Government.

Then there is once more reproach of that "now famous 1865 decision—a decision honestly made, but a decision arrived at from ignorance, or rather a more dangerous thing, half knowledge; and a decision against the spirit of the English race."

And very early in her next chapter comes emphasis once more on the fact that negroes, whether in Africa or in America, do not die off—even when enslaved.

This fact urges on us the belief that these negroes are a great world race—a race not passing off the stage of human affairs, but one that has an immense amount of history before it. Whatever we do in Africa to-day, a thousand years hence, there will be Africans to thrive or suffer for it.

The last chapter in the volume gives a brief description of the British rule in West Africa—then under six separate governments: Nigeria being under three separate governments and governors, to all of whom she paid tribute, leading up to a larger praise.

Three such men ought to give us success, particularly when they have at home in England so ardent an Imperialist as Mr. Chamberlain in the position of Her Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies; but whether they will be able to make the British Empire in West Africa a success remains to be seen. There is reasonable room for hope, as there has not been before in the story of Britain in West Africa, for Britain in West Africa to-day has got a statesman up at headquarters who realises her importance. I have tried to show how Sir George Goldie was a new factor in

West African affairs—an Indian-Empire-maker man. I could show you how Mr. Chamberlain is also for West Africa a new type—namely, the statesman up in England who cares; and I could demonstrate this by telling you how he, first among British statesmen, has recognised that Britain's greatest enemy in West Africa—the thing that has prevented this region, with which she has been so long connected, from succeeding as such regions as Canada have succeeded—is death.

There follow a few words about the foundation, “mainly at the instigation of A. L. Jones,” of a school of tropical medicine in Liverpool and the despatch of scientific experts to investigate the causes of malarial fever:

From this we may hope Mr. Chamberlain will—or, if not he, some future statesman—see that just as white men's lives can be saved in West Africa by calling in science in the domain of Medicine, so black men's lives may be saved there and the true development of the natives into worthy citizens of the world aided by calling in Science in the domain of Anthropology. When this other step in advance is taken, we shall not only cease to kill unnecessarily, but shall do a far more important thing—cease to spoil, as we now do, a very fine race of human beings at considerable expense and to no one's profit. When we do this thing we shall be able to extricate ourselves at last from the Slave Trade, and not keep on with it under changed names. . . .

Not with mere human, drifting, striving, narrow effort, nor by emotionalism, however pure, can we succeed in West Africa. With “the inward aid of God,” as Spinoza calls Science, we can.

There follows in the book one last sentence—only too appropriate:—

In the words of that grand old sea chanty that has rung out under Britain's flag over every sea in this world, “Good-bye, and fare you well!”

But in reality she meant her review of the existing state to be followed by an admonitory view of the future. When the volume appeared in 1895 she wrote to me:—

I quite disagree with you about the goodness of the little book. If you look at that bit about influence of climatic conditions, you

will detect signs of a volcanic upheaval and of my sitting on it; and again in the last chapter, when there was simply nothing to be done but leave off."

The volcanic explosion occurred about page 19, where she dwells on the fact that negroes are "a race most probably indigenous to the African continent, highly specialised to resist the unhealthiness of the Guinea climate—a race differing radically from the European and Asiatic races of to-day—possessing alike virtues and vices that do not characterise them." These are matters on which she had a deal of explosive stuff to let out—but she sat on it. Presumably in a series of this kind, it was not possible to inquire whether there really was one garden of Eden for all men—and even one Noah's ark. But I can only guess at what she cut there. At the end, I know what she wanted to say: the galley-slips are before me—sent to Mrs. Green with the note—"this has been edited out of the *Story of West Africa*." I propose to give here the most significant part of her observations on slavery.

In conclusion to this story of West Africa, I merely beg the student of it to bear in mind a few things; for I venture to think that of all bits of history the West African bit is the most enshrouded in difficulty to the student who searches only for truth.

First, in contemplating English West African history, you must allow for the alteration in public opinion regarding the slave trade. This alteration is of great interest, and its effects in Africa have been immense and far-reaching. The soul of the movement for the abolition of slavery is the same soul that in Europe animated the French Revolution, and the English readjustment of the position of the labourer in relation to the State—the "Contract Social"—the Brotherhood of Man, the Rights of Man, and so on.

The slave trade is a thing, the student will observe, that has always wanted some justification of a soothing nature to make it tolerable to European public opinion, because it is a thing which the humane man and the just man have always shrunk from and distrusted, and finally, when the humane man got the upper hand in politics, he destroyed it in the form of the African export slave trade, without regard to Imperial interests, private interests, or

expense at large in life, either black or white, or English money, and the just man helped him. But the student will know that, exciting and brilliant as the suppression of the overseas and internal slave trade of Africa has been, it has been a destruction of form and nothing more: the thing itself is as strong and as alive in practical politics as ever, not only in West Africa, but in all Africa.

Now there must be some reason for this. I think Sir H. H. Johnston, the most learned writer we have on Africa since the death of Sir Richard Burton, gives the best explanation in *The History of the Colonisation of Africa*. But whatever the reason may be, for my own part I can only tell you that slavery rose phoenix-like from the ashes of its suppression, that it is growing up again, that forty years ago it was a fledgling to what it is to-day and to what it promises to be to-morrow. In all human probability again the time will come when forced-labour systems and the rest of that machinery now called "the elevation of the African in the plane of civilisation" will again attract the attention of the humane man in Europe. With an enthusiastic horror he will recognise it as slavery, and will sweep it away, as he swept away the overseas slave trade.

That happened exactly, some ten years after she wrote it, when the Congo Free State was swept out of being. She would have rejoiced at that, but not too hopefully— for her prophecy goes on:—

There will again be a chaos of confusion in Africa, out of which will arise the same old phoenix under a new name, and so on— *Da Capo*. It is a sad thing; no one European or African is permanently the better for it. For the time being there is money to be made by it, but the time comes when that money is thrown to the winds. I will not detain you further on this point, but the slave trade has played so large a part in West African history that it cannot be ignored, and it is very necessary when you are studying it to remember not to judge any man harshly.

The alteration of public opinion, the swing of the pendulum, for many years after the suppression of the slave trade caused the African to be regarded as the phrase goes, as "a man and a brother"—an identical creature in thoughts, feelings and aspirations with the European. The African gently but firmly demonstrated that this was not the case, and gave his advocates much mortification and irritation; so they decided on regarding him as "a child." Well, of course, the African was not that either, and did not pretend to be, so, more irritated than ever, people have a tendency

now-a-days to call him a "fiend" and a "savage," and lots of nasty names which no sane scientific person can pay the least attention to, knowing that the African is a strong type of humanity with virtues and vices arranged in his character in a different way to that of the European character.

There follows a review of the consequences of the "excited view of Africa": the statesmen's recognition of its unhealthiness, their disposition to leave it entirely to the traders, and then the incursion of France and Germany, leading to attacks on the Government made by both traders and missionaries for permitting foreign Powers to seize West Africa wholesale. Then came finally the influence of "the great wave of imperialism—namely, the recognition by the English, as a people, of the necessity, for their very existence, of vast dominion and power."

The effect of this wave on West African affairs is exceedingly interesting and widely instructive, for West Africa is representative of all the difficulties and advantages England can have in the tropics. It is open to doubt whether the impulse of Imperialism alone will have in West Africa a more permanent influence than the influence of the slave trade. This point is difficult to explain without turning disrespectful to the great impulse of Imperialism, which, rising up from the hearts of the people, swayed our statesmen in the nick of time to save England from sinking to the level of a third-rate power. This thing she manifested for thirty years a tendency to do, till Imperialism became no longer—as it had ever been—the spirit of the democracy of England. But, remember, there are two other great impulses that the democracy has long shared with the great individual Englishmen. These two are, firstly, an adoration of justice, and, secondly, a belief in sound finance. If Imperialism works with these two in West Africa, its influence there will be permanent. If it does not, it will go the way of the slave trade, which was profitable and in its day much thought of as a factor in Empire-making—but it left justice out of account, and justice destroyed it. Now the English can combine Imperialism with justice, as has been demonstrated by our modern Empire, under conditions of equal difficulty to those presented by tropical Africa; therefore we may hope our tropical African Empire will become in time as great a glory to us as a

people as India is. We are now at the parting of the ways. This generation of Englishmen can decide whether we are to have another India, or another West Indies.

Before the book for which that was written saw publication—in January 1900—all the world in England was thinking of issues wider than that in West Africa. Even before the South African War broke out, she was profoundly concerned with the temper which led up to it—that emotionalism which she denounced as unnatural to England. She went down to Liverpool and lectured on Imperialism—beginning with her fears of an outbreak of anti-Imperialism, of which she saw symptoms in the minds of thinking Englishmen. “We old-fashioned Imperialists must carefully attend to the destruction of these moths that would, while pretending to be Imperialists, eat our ermine—namely those men who make it to-day possible for honourable humane Englishmen like Mr. John Morley, Mr. Courtney and Mr. Wallace to rise up and question the righteousness of the spirit of Imperialism in England.”<sup>1</sup>

Chief amongst these dangers she placed Mr. Kipling’s poem, “The White Man’s Burden.” This indeed sounded a paradox on her lips, for she held:—

Never has the true Imperial policy for us been better put than by Mr. Kipling:—

Keep ye the Law, be swift in all obedience :  
Clear the land of evil—drive the road and bridge the ford.  
Make ye sure for each his own  
That he reap what he hath sown ;  
By the Peace among our people let men know we serve the Lord.

Also is he, in a way, the greatest practical empire-maker we have with us. Men, away far from home and England, feel, thanks to him, that England cares for them, that they matter to her, and that their work seems a work worth doing. For has he not sung our song, the song of the likes of me and many better men and women, that of “The Lost Legion”? But when Mr. Kipling the other day sang “The White Man’s Burden,” he struck

<sup>1</sup> *Lecture reprinted in West African Studies*, p. 418.

a string alien to us, and we liked it as much as a wet slate pencil rubbed against a slate; it was the first line we had ever met of his that we did not understand—it found in our hearts no echo. We old-fashioned Teutons have never felt any amount of Empire any burden, and we do not intend to rule “sullen, silent people”; such things are not in our line, we want and we will have all the world we can, and we will have it no burden to us; nor will we calmly allow England to be a burden on those we gather beneath the shadow of her wings. Our watchword is Egmont’s “*Fruchtbarkeit und Freiheit! Freiheit und Ruhe!*” We know no white man’s burden save of white man’s making; we can manage the rest.<sup>1</sup>

The pith of her creed was that England had the right to seek power overseas, for the sake of England. She did not ever dispute the right of complete conquest and annexation when undeveloped land was available that Englishmen could use. What had happened in America, in Australia, in New Zealand, did not seem to her contrary to natural justice, not even though the natives suffered. Nor in the countries where Englishmen could not live and thrive did she think it unjust that England should assert, by force if necessary, her right to trade, so that Englishmen at home might find market for their wares. But to preach that it was England’s sacred duty to go and do these things for the sake of other peoples seemed to her cant; and she felt that England would turn against it. The financial experts who pointed out the expensiveness of Imperial administration became a danger if the tax-payer found that administration was represented as a duty undertaken for the sake of “sullen savage peoples.”

The danger certainly does not lie in any chance of any running short of England’s power or England’s money, but it lies in the chance that the time may come when she will run short of spirit to use these things in support of her Empire overseas. Nothing can make her spirit to support Imperialism a fixed and permanent thing save the knowledge—not the emotion or the sentiment, mind you, but the knowledge—that Imperialism is a good and

<sup>1</sup> *West African Studies*, p. 419



honest thing. Once get her to recognise this, she will stick to it as to trial by jury and habeas corpus, but not till then. It is no use telling her it pays: she has seen Venice rolling in riches. It is no use telling her it is magnificent: she has seen Spain magnificent, and she sees them both to-day. It is not good enough. The only thing she in her heart of hearts knows is good enough is the thing she has all her youth fought for—justice.<sup>1</sup>

Another lecture of hers dealt with "Imperialism in West Africa." It was delivered at the Imperial Institute in February 1900, and it somehow lacks her ordinary fire.<sup>2</sup> Men's thoughts were elsewhere than in West Africa—even her thoughts. The early reverses in Natal, where Ladysmith was still beleaguered, had developed a temper in England that was remote indeed from what England showed when incomparably heavier losses befel her forces in a struggle against antagonists of her own strength. Misfortunes which now seem to us petty created a kind of despair, and when Lord Rosebery pronounced the word efficiency, he was hailed as a deliverer. Mary Kingsley spoke her mind, where she had so often expressed it, in the *Spectator's* friendly columns, heading her letter "Efficiency and Empire":—

There are possibly still many among us who question the importance of our understanding alien races, and indeed any race, with a lower culture level than our own. Recent events may have convinced many that it is an excellent thing to know details concerning the possibilities and powers of those people with whom in our widespread Empire we have to deal. It will act in the direction of preventing us from engineering our good intentions in such a manner as to make them appear tyrannies and hateful to those whom we wish to benefit by them.

She referred then to Majuba and its after consequences, but she was thinking of Sierra Leone.

Our commercial expansion in the days of Elizabeth was marked by an intense love of knowledge of the minor details. If you read your Dampier, or any of that old school of Imperialism, you will find chronicled all manner of domestic details about the strange countries and peoples they came in contact with. Our colonial,

<sup>1</sup> *West African Studies*, p. 416.

<sup>2</sup> See *Ibid.*, p. 430.

or emigrant, expansion of the age of Victoria has been marked by no such love of detailed knowledge: in its place there is emotionalism. A back wave of this emotionalism gave us the Indian Mutiny, but our Indian Empire, being a descendant of our older Imperialism, survived, and has returned to its earlier tradition. In other regions, however, emotionalism has had fuller play and has been regarded as a substitute for detailed knowledge. . . I beg you will not think that by emotionalism I mean either true religion or true human sympathy. That emotionalism I so deeply detest is windy-headed brag and self-satisfied ignorance. It is the nearest thing an Englishman can have to hysterics, and his emotionalism is not naturally inclined to this, but when he has them they are no use to him. They cannot help him to spread abroad his power, his religion, his justice, or his commerce. Yet undoubtedly he has of late years chosen this emotionalism for his counsellor in place of his Elizabethan counsellor, detailed knowledge, and his emotionalism has poisoned many of his noblest enterprises, has cost him much blood and money and heartache, and it has above all things in the way of harm made him suffer that grievous delusion "the end justifies the means." I sincerely hope, now he has had a showy break down in it, he will depose it, and replace that counsellor who so greatly helped to give him world power. The lesson detailed knowledge teaches is hard and dry. . . . It says: "Learn things as they are and keep your given word; let it cost you what it may, be just." Emotionalism says: "Mean well, be merciful and generous"; forgetting that mercy and generosity are only compromises made towards the attainment of justice, not in themselves justice, that perfect thing by which alone an Empire can endure and prosper, and which is attainable by honourable-minded Englishmen by knowledge of the facts as they are.

Coming from anyone else this would have been treated as a suggestion that England's dealing with the Boers had been less than scrupulous; but St. Loe Strachey very rightly thought that her intentions were so far beyond suspicion that she could be trusted not to mislead.—It was perhaps less plain to him than to me that she was uneasy about the public attitude.

I had written an article on "The Honour of a Nation"—its main purport being that treaties made with a little Power are of no less binding force than those made with a great one—a proposition which then did not find

general acceptance. I am glad to recall that she approved. She wrote:—

Get it published at once. If they get a trifling success they will throw away the lesson disaster is teaching them; and the stock-broker in place of the merchant, the hysterical female in place of the woman, the plucky empty-headed instrument in place of the thinker, will go on ruling; and there is no man to-day to sift them out and rule there. England's rough honour will turn against them roughly, as it did to the slave trade, *or* they will bite off a bit bigger than they can chew, and smash goes the British Empire and all it might have been, *could be*, to humanity.

Her "could" was amplified by a further note on something I had said of "British rule":

No, *not* rule, but our vestry system. If our rule were what it might be but *is not*—if it were Liberty, Justice, Representation—we *should* have the right, the divine right, to enforce it, but so long as it *isn't* we have *not*, we are taking unto ourselves the right of God when we are an idol.

She signed the letter "yours gratefully," to signify her agreement with what I preached.

Earlier letters to me set out the discomfort in her mind—not being, she said, "conceited enough to regard the Anglo-Saxon as perfect."

If other people would not abuse him so much, probably we would do the abusing ourselves; but it is a dire mess as it stands. Good old Lecky, in spite of his copybook style, has lots of solid truth in him. But the Anglo-Saxon requires some greater prophet to physic him, now he is suffering from too much beans. Mrs. Green's set have no chance with him—they lash him and he kicks instead of listening. I can't do anything. I am vulgar, so the A.S. understands me, but the superior soul shrinks from me and laughs at Lecky's "copybook."

And again on February 2, 1900:—

I am deeply grieved and worried about the thing as it is. My own creed in the matter is so narrow and so hard, so much lower at some points, so much higher at others. I love my own country.

I have seen for years it must go smash if it sticks to the creed it had, say this day six months back, but do anything to save the crash, I felt I could not. One half of the people would shrink back in horror from half the things I would do, the other half say, "That's too fine a feeling of honour for practical politics." Now they have got the razzledazzles with the failure of the thing they thought practical, perhaps they would listen even better than ever before to a leader free from the lower part of the creed of honour that there is in me and stronger, wiser, and more persuasive—above all, a man. I had a most distressing row with Nathan which grieves me—but still it was comic; there was he the Jew and I the Dane, both equally feeling we were English to the backbone and right in our divergent views—both of us unlike the great mass of English as we, or they, are to Chinese.—Comic was it also to listen to people last Sunday in the inner government circle—going round and round things, and finally deciding that a merciful and loving providence had given us these reverses as a lesson! Good idea in its way, but if they think Providence is coming down to take charge of affairs, the War Office for example, or Westminster at large, I am certain they are mistaken; and if Providence thinks they are going to understand what he means by the lesson, I am sure he is mistaken. I wish I could get at Providence for five minutes and tell him, if he made humanity, the way he attempts to educate the infant is disgraceful, and he might as well be a Heathen oracle at once.

Then came the announcement of her decision :

I am not walking about the streets in a cockalory hat and khaki small clothes, but barring accidents and providence, I am going out the first week in March.

She had, in fact, provided herself with a theoretical reason for going to South Africa—to collect freshwater fishes from the Orange River for Dr. Günther. How this was to be accomplished in the midst of war is not easy to see; but it was an excuse for taking her passage, and from the time she landed, she simply reported for duty.

Plainly, too, she conceived it part of her duty to inform the newspaper with which she had most sympathy; and letters to Strachey tell the story vividly.

*The Moor,  
South Atlantic Ocean.*

22.3.00.

MY DEAR MR. STRACHEY,

We have had so far a wonderfully calm voyage as far as the weather has gone, but apart from that one of continuous up-  
roars, because we have (a) two bands on board, (b) a gramophone, (c) upwards of 650 soldiers and officers, namely General Rundle and Staff. Staff for the 8th Division and also staff for General Carrington's force and a draft of the Buffs and East Surrey Militia regiments. I am contracting scarlet fever in a mild form, but, like Mrs. Gummidge, fractious and thinking of the old 'un, for the military are nothing like so amusing as Palm Oil ruffians and they lack the individuality and self-reliance. We have had a good deal of sickness on board. Of course all the military were seasick. Nothing can prevent them being so, flat-ironing the ocean would not avail. When they were over that, we had a touch of pneumonia among them and one poor fellow died. My captain says they lost seven soldiers by pneumonia last voyage, and then there have been cases of mild sunstroke and heat collapse. I don't wonder at it, and only wonder more of them don't die. This is a small ship for the number she is carrying. The raffle of gear in the waist prevents all circulation of air, and the men are most unsuitably clad for the voyage through the tropics—thick grey flannel shirts, thick dark cloth tunics and trousers or ditto woollen Khaki, any amount of thoroughly warm nightcaps of every imaginable shade, good enough for the voyage to Madeira, but for the next fortnight after Madeira simply killing, and they all look terribly fagged. I doubt if it be wise to land men in a region reeking with enteric so pumped and off colour as these men are. Moreover, the government has provided serum for inoculating them for enteric, and inoculated many of them have been, and very ill it has made them for the time being. Now they are being vaccinated. Altogether things are being rather crammed, for they have upwards of 6000 rounds of ammunition to fire away during the voyage. It is only firing it away, for they have not been able to devise a floating target, so they shoot at the waves. Still it accustoms them to handling their guns and fire away that ammunition because it is all dum dum and may not be landed in Cape Town, and thereby hangs a tale *not for publication*. There were thirty million rounds of dum dum in our South African military stores. Some of that was in Ladysmith, of course, for use against natives if need be, but conceive the shriek that would have gone up from the Boers

and their friends had it fallen into their hands. I suppose White had not time to destroy it and abandon Ladysmith, and so he in holding Ladysmith did more good than shows on the surface. You know I think the agitation against dum dum while you allow sporting bullets to be used in warfare all rot, but think of the effect of the announcement that say twenty million rounds of dum dum had been captured from the British.

I have recovered somewhat from my cold and enjoy being at sea again and warm, but not the noise and continual societyism of this boat. I will inflict no more on you now. We are in the long rollers South of the Equator, and writing is difficult.

• With love to Mrs. Strachey,

Yours very truly,

M. H. KINGSLEY.

22.3.00.

P.S.—I have advised A. L. Jones of Liverpool to try and see you and talk to you about the service rendered to the State by the mercantile marine. All the military ju jus on board are enthusiastic about it and I should like you to see Jones.

Alas all the military are very very sick again. We are now in the Southern rollers and the "Moor" very frisky.

She herself, not being anyway incommoded by such friskiness, carried on her usual occupations. She wrote and sent home from shipboard a spirited account of an African voyage, made by Captain Phillips in the ship *Hannibal*, of London, "whereby the students of West Africa may be instructed in the way wherein the slave trade was carried on in the seventeenth century." It is printed in the second edition of *West African Studies*, and is there described as "probably the writer's last composition." That may be literally true: but she wrote also on that voyage, while they were still in the Bay of Biscay, what I should like to describe as her last word: a letter to a paper called *The New Africa*, published in Liberia.

It was reprinted by George Macmillan in his personal account of her prefixed to the second edition of *West African Studies*; but regarding it in a manner as her testament, I have thought it proper to reproduce it in full

as an Appendix to this Life of her. None the less, I must quote here the passage of most significance for the light it throws on her own mind.

I know that there is a general opinion among the leading men of both races that Christianity will give the one possible solution to the whole problem. I fail to be able to believe this. I fail to believe Christianity will bring peace between the two races, for the simple reason that though it may be possible to convert Africans *en masse* into practical Christians, it is quite impossible to convert Europeans *en masse*. You have only got to look at the history of any European nation—the Dutch, the Spanish, the Italian and German—every one calling themselves Christians, but none the more for that tolerant and peaceable. Each one of them is ready to take out a patent for a road to Heaven and make that road out of men's blood and bones and the ashes of burnt homesteads. Of course by doing this they are not following the true teaching of Jesus Christ, but that has not and will not become a factor in politics. So I venture to say that you who build on Christianity in this matter are not building on safe ground. You cannot by talking about Christianity to the Europeans save your people. I believe there is a thing you could appeal to more safely in this case of the Anglo-Saxon, particularly the English—that thing is *honour*, the honour of a gentleman.

The secret of her influence with her own countrymen lay in this utter frankness, which was never touched with insolence. She knew where the idealism of her race was stored, and she insisted that appeal should be made to that which no honest man of her race disregarded.

This was the kernel of her advice to the educated Africans; but through the letter she speaks her mind in all the fullness of its generosity and its lovely candour. Throughout it also, I think, she was saying good-bye to the Africa that she knew and did not expect to see again.

For she did not conceal her presentiment. To one of her friends, Mr. R. G. Blaize, a leading native merchant at Lagos, she wrote just before she left London. "I am going to South Africa nursing, and I may not return." This was followed by lengthy advice for the guidance

of his African people. But indeed the words of the old sea-chanty with which she concluded her *Story of West Africa* were constantly on her lips in that last winter of her life. She used them again in her lecture on Imperialism in West Africa when she spoke on February 12, 1900, at the Imperial Institute, with her project for the new journey already formed: and this time she gave the refrain a finish. "Good-bye and fare ye well, for I am homeward bound."

She was not long reaching home after she touched land. We have more than one account from herself of what happened: I take first the extracts from her letter to Mrs. Green, published in *The Times* of August 8, 1900:—

To make a long story short, I went to the P.M.O., General Wilson, and said I was out to help in any way he pleased. He said, "Will you go to Simon's Town to the Boer prisoners?"—evidently expecting I wouldn't. I said "If that's what you want done, yes." It was. Those prisoners were dying in a way the British authorities, properly so called, did not approve of.

The plain truth was this terrific outburst of camp fever broke out among Cronje's men, who for over a week had been living underground with dead men and horses and drinking the decoction thereof. The fever burst out just when science could have told the authorities it would; but science, as I have said before, is not attended to, so the authorities were unprepared. They did what they could, they spared no expense, they poured forth brandy, milk, eggs, champagne, etc., they wrote miles on miles on paper, they worked a few individual officials to death *more suo*; the wretched doctor and the two only nurses they had to tackle the outburst were nearly done for when I arrived. I have nearly been done for since; but now we have two more doctors and three more nurses, and a lot more orderlies and Army Service men on the job, and the work is getting organised; but all to-day I have had over a hundred patients under my own charge—killing work from the nature of the case—delirious, fretting strong men, every third man wanting a nurse to himself. . . . I am regularly called in to field wanderers in the other wards. "Oh, Sister, there's a man out!" is a phrase I shall long remember.

They are a most civil set of men. Those we have are mostly of the *Beitwohner* class, men who the big Boer farmers allowed to



live on their farms and cultivate an allotment in return for services when required; but they are a courtly set of people, they never take a thing from you without a "Thank you"; when they are not delirious, they obey every word you say.

Mrs. Green very justly protested against a suggestion that had been made that Miss Kingsley's imperialistic sympathies rendered the task of nursing Boers uncongenial, because they were Boers. Nothing could have been less like her. But it is only right to give here another letter which she wrote to Strachey, speaking her mind on the issues involved, as well as recounting the experiences. It has already been published in Mrs. Strachey's book *St. Loe Strachey and his Paper*; otherwise I might think twice before giving to print what was the confidential expression of a view formed after very brief though intensive observation at a time of furious stress. But there is no reason to blink the fact that she was fiercely, though never arrogantly, an Englishwoman.

*British Hotel,  
Simonstown.*

May, 1900.

MY DEAR MR. STRACHEY,

Just a short line, for I am very tired. With my usual luck, I have dropped in for a repulsive job. I went and offered my services to General Wilson, P.M.O., at the Castle at Capetown; he said he would be glad to put me on active service at once if I would come over here and see to the Boer prisoners' hospital, which was giving trouble, and as I said I would do what I could to help him as a nurse, I of course had to say yes, and came on here forthwith, and a pretty state of affairs I found. There is, I believe, going to be an awful row over it in the Commons, of course from the pro-Boer faction, so for your private information I will mention a few facts.

(a) Absolutely no expense has been spared by our authorities to save the Boer prisoners from dying. There is an unlimited supply of brandy, milk, eggs, champagne, and so on, at their disposal.

(b) There has been a shortage of people to see they got the aforesaid.

(c) The affair has suffered from the usual lack of organising power, absence of mobility, and the curse of clerking—write, write, write, report, examine, but to get off paper and down on facts is evidently extremely difficult in this country.

The Boer prisoners who had been confined on ships and in limited areas, and apparently ill-fed, and never washed, either before or after entering into confinement, naturally had a terrific outbreak of enteric fever and measles. This evidently gave the Governmental powers here the doozles, and they sweated ink on the situation. They also placed the so-called "Palace" Barracks here at their disposal as a hospital prior to having it whitewashed or in any way made suitable for that purpose; into it they sent the wretched patients, and gave it to an already over-worked Doctor to see after, omitting to supply either nurses or proper orderlies. The consequences have been, of course, a terrible death-rate and a regular howl from the Afrikaner section here. The medical officers have moved heaven and earth to improve matters, and now I think I may say it has been done and things will go better; but I never struck such a rocky bit of the valley of the Shadow of Death in all my days as the Palace Hospital, Simonstown. There seems to have been at the first start-off a nightmare state of affairs when dead men were found on the floor in the morning by the doctor; if he kept an eye on them during the day, and if he stopped with them at night and went to do his other work during the day, then somebody found dead men on the floor in the evening on his return. Then two most excellent women, Nurse Rowlandson and Nurse Jackson, were sent on. For a fortnight they stuck to it night and day, but of course could do little more than feed and give medicines to the patients, and see to it that they died in their beds. Die they did, four and five a day. Then I was sent on, and thirty more new patients poured in, and I did my best and nearly killed myself. It is no use attempting to describe the thing: the rows of narrow iron bedsteads with sack-cloth sheets and mud-coloured blankets mixed up among the aforesaid; more or less on the bed a big bearded man, or a boy of 16-17, delirious—in a typical typhoid way moaning and muttering, and now and then talking to his people at home or fighting a fight over again, in kitchen Dutch and in English. One boy, who for twenty-four hours kept on calling "Miss Johanna, please come down, down here," I shall not forget in a hurry; nor a giant of a man in mortal agony ten hours, and three sizes too big for the bed even if he had been quiet—and for the matter of that many more.

Well, the hospital is on two floors, divided into wards on each. Suppose you are tackling the giant, putting some of him in bed,

and feeding him, you hear "Miss Johanna" going on, an under-chorus of groans and racking coughs, then a "flump," which means some man whose life depends on his being quite quiet in bed is out on the floor, and you leave the giant, or whoever you have in hand, and go for the flumper, for if you don't he'll kill another man by getting in on top of him. Meanwhile there is an unutterable stench and things Herodotus would not name in all directions. Moreover the Boers are family men, and when you rouse one to feed or physic him he asks after his family and then after his trousers because of the money in them. Well, you cannot give a satisfactory account of either. If there is a member of his family in the Hospital, as in very many cases there are—that man is dead or dying. As for his trousers, they are in a heap in the back yard, so you lie both ways. I do, and say "It's all right" in both cases, which I know it isn't, or that "I will find out," which I know I can't, and the patient returns to his oblivion and I to another patient. The other two nurses are equally endangering their bodies and souls with other patients on the other floors. Here there is another feature in the affair which is unpleasant. When a man is dying definitely, you don't like the two next to turn to see the performance, so you trot off and find the two little screens. Well, the other two know what those screens mean perfectly well, only they think they are there for them, so they start off on dying too. We have had four or five a night dying under these conditions since I was here on Sunday. Then there are the never-to-be-forgotten bugs and lice. They swarm. "The Palace" supplies the bugs free of charge, the patients the lice; they get on well together and make common cause on humanity, of course including you. Well, I will dwell no more on this thing. I am back on night duty to-night, and things are mending. We had yesterday a new doctor sent in all to ourselves, and he is doing marvels, for we had no deaths last night and only two in the afternoon, and we also had three more nurses, two hospital ones and a good old lady who is a district nurse, and who keeps on assuring the doctors, myself, and the other nurses that she is especially experienced in midwifery. Now until that woman came I should have said that there was no resource of civilisation that could not be found useful and thoroughly wanted by the Palace. Now I see I was hasty, and a midwife is a thing not required. She is a good old soul, however, and very kindly and useful, and failing her form of practice she does her best; and under the influence of the food we have poured into them and the new doctor's physic, the patients are quieting down somewhat, for how long we do not know. To keep things cheerful, last night when we

were at dinner we heard guns, which means prisoners were escaping from the camp. About 2.30 this morning there were brought into us two men, a black shot through the kidneys fatally and accidentally in the skirmish, and a bayoneted Boer, one who had tried to get away. We got them into bed and expect they will die to-night when we are on duty again, and as we rather expect three more deaths to-night too, I shall be glad when it is to-morrow. Twenty-seven prisoners got away last night; four were fired at and killed outright, and sixteen were reported to have got clear away.—To give you some idea of the state of public feeling here at the Admiral's headquarters and in the midst of Cape Colony—the white men who had been supplying the horses for the Government's carts refused to let them drag the cart with the wounded prisoners to the Hospital—in fact would assist them in no way. So the Tommies had to drag the cart up half-way from the camp to the hospital, and then got mules for the rest of the journey. There is not an atom of doubt with whom in this fight the sympathies of the majority of the inhabitants of this colony are with—namely with the Boers. The English Colonists are holding meetings everywhere in favour of complete annexation, and they are doing it as enthusiastically and loudly as possible, and quite right too, in order to impress upon you up at home how necessary it is that annexation should be complete this time. They know their existence as a free people depends on this thing being done; but the majority of the people here are not English. They don't hold public meetings; they know it is not safe for them to do so, but they think the more. It seems to me absolute rot for people like our Conciliation Committee to think any good can be done by half measures. You have got to choose whether you will have free Englishmen here or free Boers. I say we must have free Englishmen because of the Imperio-geographical positions of the place, but I am perfectly certain that that means enslaving these Boers. Your freedom of institutions, etc., etc., is slavery to them, and they will not be grateful for your advantages. They want their own country their very own; it works out in all their delirium—"ons Land, ons Land!" One of them held forth to me to-day, a sane one, how he knew every hill's name, every bend of the river's name, every twist in the road—his hills, roads, rivers, not England's, or Germany's, but "ons Land." We English are born Imperialists, these men are born nationalists; but I will say no more on that now; it is a rocky problem for the future. Personally, as apart from nationalism, they have no hatred for us, when we are from England. I have to ask them their names and habitations to get them properly

logged now and then. One turns on me and asks me mine. I tell him and he says "How long have you been here?" I say "A week, for the first time." He confides this to the rest of the ward, and I am treated on a different footing to the colonial nurses, and obeyed in a most obliging way.

Her whole stay in Simonstown was of about two months. The medical officer in charge, Dr. Carré, had only taken up his duties about a week when she joined as a nursing sister. Between them they "converted chaos into order, or as she herself put it, turned a mortuary into a sanatorium."—So Dr. Carré reported to her friends in Liverpool; but it was only the preface to telling them how she contracted enteric from the patients, and after an operation, died peacefully of heart failure.

She had charged him with one commission and a strange one; but she held to it so strongly that he was directed, if it proved impossible to carry out her wishes on the spot, to embalm her body, and send it home to Liverpool with a message to Sir Alfred Jones "that it was her dying prayer to be buried at sea."

This was, I believe, the only favour and distinction that she ever asked for herself; and it was accorded with every circumstance of honour. The great shipowner was not called on to arrange her burying: army and navy took charge. A party of West Yorkshires, with band before them, drew the coffin from the hospital on a gun-carriage to the pier at Simonstown, whence a launch took it to Torpedo Boat No. 29, which put to sea and, rounding Cape Point, committed her to the element in which she had chosen to be laid.

She would have been a proud woman that day could she have known; for she loved the army and navy of her country. Yet I think in that singular departing gesture of hers she claimed her place not with the regulated and disciplined forces, but with the roving adventurers whose essential life lay on the seas and across the seas. Her father had been of them as much as she,

yet he had a landsman's burial beside the woman who had kept his home. But she who through all her distinct life had neither mate nor hearth was a freer rover than he, and the resting-place of her choice was limited by no boundary.

## CHAPTER XIII

### AFTERWARDS

MARY KINGSLEY's death was mourned by all those who had association with her. The Liverpool Chamber of Commerce held a special meeting to pass a vote of condolence. In the Press, quite apart from those London papers whose editors were, like Strachey, her friends, there was a personal note of regret, due to the fact that in nearly every great provincial town she had been seen and heard on the platform and had made friends of her hearers.

But it is more significant to note what was done to honour her memory. The first thing, naturally, was to bring out a new edition of the book which held most of her thought—*West African Studies*—adding to it what she had written or spoken elsewhere on West African property, religion and law and on Imperialism as affecting West Africa and in its wider aspect. To make this possible, the long appendices to the first edition, not from her pen, were dropped out.

In the Introductory Notice, George Macmillan quoted another man's phrase that to him summed up "the rare combination of overflowing sympathy and intellectual grasp which constituted at once the power and the charm of Mary Kingsley. 'She had the brain of a man and the heart of a woman.' " It was Sir George Goldie who said that, and no other man living was so well qualified to pass judgment on her.

The close of the notice recorded two practical steps taken—"The merchants of Liverpool and Manchester, who knew what she had done to call attention to their achievements and necessities, promptly decided to estab-

lish in Liverpool a 'Mary Kingsley' hospital for the treatment of tropical diseases. Others, who know that her careful study of West African problems had aroused in her a passionate desire to promote a better understanding between the native races and the Englishmen who come into relations with them, have decided that no nobler monument could be raised to her memory than an attempt to carry on, as far as may be, this beneficent work. The 'National Memorial to Mary Kingsley' will therefore comprise alongside of the hospital, the formation of a 'Mary Kingsley Society of West Africa,' for the systematic study of native customs and institutions, which, it is hoped, may help to do for English rule in West Africa what by similar methods the Royal Asiatic Society has done to guide to its unequalled success our administration in India."—The Hospital is a living focus of that scientific work which since her day has enormously lessened the wastage of life in West Africa. The Society (soon re-named The African Society), after thirty years, is still active, and still publishes its *Journal* of proceedings. During its first years a leading part in its work was taken by Mrs. J. R. Green, who wrote with moving eloquence the memorial sketch of Mary Kingsley with which the first number opened. E. D. Morel was continuously active in assisting her.

These belonged to the section of her friends whose sympathies were certainly not imperialist in the ordinary sense. But Sir George Goldie, the imperial statesman of Imperial Africa, and Sir Alfred Lyall, among the most distinguished men that ever sat on the Indian Council, were among the three or four who contributed in an outstanding measure alike to its funds and its policy. And of her friends the traders, Sir Alfred Jones and Mr. John Holt took an active part in the foundation and development of the Society.

It would be easy to accumulate impressive testimony to her work, but I prefer to limit myself to two witnesses. One is Dr. S. W. Blyden, probably the most notable



native she knew: in her own words, written when she was introducing him to Strachey, "acknowledged to be a great Arabic scholar and an educated man of the first class, yet a perfectly typical true Negro." He had at that time resigned his post as Native Agent for Lagos in resentment of the hut-tax war; but he was later director of Mahommedan education on the Gold Coast. He, addressing the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce in September 1901 on "West Africa before Europe," began his review of the agencies at work for civilisation and progress by saying what he thought of Mary Kingsley:—

I recognised in her a spirit sent to the world to serve Africa and the African race in a way in which it was not given to others to serve them. Miss Kingsley was one of those simple beings to whom nothing seems an impossibility that is noble and just.

I quote one more testimony, this time of a European, but one who has lived in more intimate contact with the West Coast natives than perhaps any man since Dr. Nassau. Captain R. S. Rattray, after five years in East Africa, entered the political service of the Gold Coast and made a special study of the Ashanti language and institutions. In 1922 he was seconded from his ordinary work that he might devote himself wholly to anthropology. I do not know whether Sir Gordon Guggisberg, the Governor responsible for this appointment, knew that he was carrying out one of Mary Kingsley's most frequently advocated doctrines. But when Captain Rattray was sent to spend two years in the hinterland beyond Ashanti, studying language, law and custom in order that when indirect rule was introduced among these people it should be introduced with knowledge, it is certain that he was set to a task which Mary Kingsley would have barely hoped to see undertaken by a servant of the Colonial Office. There is no better measure of the change that has come about since her work began.

Captain Rattray has, of course, written of Ashanti

institutions, their religion, their laws and their traditions. Acknowledging my review of one of these works, he wrote to me:—

Miss Kingsley was the greatest white woman who ever went to West Africa, and proud I am to have had my efforts coupled with such a name.

In some ways I think she was inspired. Her face (I only know it from an old photograph) in an old poke bonnet has always struck me as a beautiful face.

I would willingly have given a few years of life to have met her.

What, then, have been the results of a life which so impressed her contemporaries and even those who never knew her?

Let me recall its outline.—When the objects of her long and devoted service in her home were suddenly removed, she went out on distant and dangerous adventure—fully knowing the danger—with a scientific purpose. In the course of it she found, being passionately an Englishwoman, much that seemed to need amendment in England's dealing with the negro peoples; and she spoke her mind, with practical intent, yet with no thought of making these political objects her first or engrossing concern. Then came, unexpectedly, the Sierra Leone trouble, produced by a policy which seemed the very negation of all that should be conceived or carried out, and she threw herself into a fight against this sinister example of misgovernment, and against the causes which had produced it and were likely to produce other examples. On this fight she spent herself, reckless of health, and in this fight she believed herself to be wholly irretrievably beaten. Nothing shook her conviction that she was right, but she left England for another field, believing that she had failed, and believing that, if her gifts for the work had been greater, she might have succeeded.

But had she failed?

She was convinced that under the rule of the Colonial

Office England's West African possessions would become a source of loss and of discredit to the Empire. The contrary has been the case.

But the policy by which these results have been achieved has not been the policy against which Mary Kingsley contended. Take a single instance. She was convinced that the hut-tax, having been established in Sierra Leone, would be applied in all the other colonies. She was wrong. In the very prosperous Gold Coast it has not been put on. In Nigeria, the case was more complex, for the whole of Northern Nigeria\* was under Mohammedan rule, and direct taxation is in no way incompatible with Mohammedan ideas. In Southern Nigeria, where the communities were accustomed to purely African ideas, no direct taxation was applied for more than twenty years. Within the last decade, this system has been extended from the Northern countries lower down the river—and it has in a small way produced revolt.

That is the essence of the matter. Unless the hut-tax has been reconciled to African notions of property, its imposition has been a departure from the principles on which British rule in West Africa has been based during this century—that is, throughout the period of its prosperous development. One man more than any other has been responsible for the direction of that rule—Lord Lugard—and on May 23, 1931, he addressed the London School of Economics concerning the matter.

"It was essential," he said, "never to lose sight of the fundamental fact that we were dealing with peoples who had evolved for themselves methods and systems suited to their own mentality, climate and development. Their systems of land tenure and of rights of property or use in trees or forest were based on fixed principles, rigidly enforced, though in some cases perhaps on the Gold Coast they had become weakened by the opposing conceptions of the right of individual property in the soil which Europeans had introduced."

Yet this process of weakening was strongly resisted by the English governing authorities. In June 1924 Lord Leverhulme, whose business interests in West Africa were enormous, said, speaking at Liverpool:—

You cannot have prosperous business without some security for the capital invested. We had no rights for the palm trees in Sierra Leone. We had no right to collect the fruit ourselves or to force the natives to collect it, with the result that there was such an irregular supply of fruit that we came away. Not so in the Belgian Congo, where we always found that under the terms of the concession, as we comply with the terms, we get the freehold of the land.

Answer to this was made by the only other West African administrator whose distinction can be compared to Lord Lugard's. Sir Hugh Clifford said at Lagos on May 3, 1925, when he was departing from the government of Nigeria—

Local native custom does not recognise individual property in land. The land in the Southern provinces of Nigeria is the inalienable communal property of the various native communities, whose rights to it are based upon effective occupation or upon immemorial usage. Lord Leverhulme suggests that we should ignore and defy a native custom which our Government has not only accepted but legalised. We have a sacred trust to discharge.

It would be absurd to suggest that either Lord Lugard or Sir Hugh Clifford derived their views of government from Mary Kingsley. Indeed, in the chapter in *West African Studies*, dealing with "The Clash of Cultures," she calls in "the aid of a better writer speaking on another race, but talking of the identical same thing"—and quotes at length from Clifford's *East Coast Etchings*. Broad principles at which Lugard arrived in East Africa, and Clifford in Malaya, were carried out in West Africa by these eminent administrators; and they were carried out under the ægis of the Colonial Office. But they were quite unlike the Colonial Office policy which Mary Kingsley attacked; and, so far as I

can judge, they were in the main the principles for which she stood.

On one important matter she certainly did not get her way. The traders have been given no share in the control of administration. Yet in the valedictory address which has been already quoted, Clifford dwelt on the "very great rapprochement" which had taken place between the merchants and the Government offices. Whereas Government officials used to feel towards the traders "as Brahmins did to sweepers," there was now good fellowship in the realm of sport. Social contacts had developed. Moreover, he regarded it as "essential that the commercial and Banking Member of the Lagos Council should be consulted on all matters affecting economic and mercantile interests and that as far as possible they should be taken frankly and freely into the confidence of the Government;" though he recognised plainly that they "have not a determining voice in the matter of taxation."

But the question for us is, How far can Mary Kingsley be held to have contributed to the change which since her short life-work has appeared in West African administration? It has to be recognised that the Convention of 1898, which ended the scramble between European Powers, put England for the first time in effective occupation of these extended territories. Lord Lugard (in the address already quoted) defines the period up to 1898 as that of consolidation and introduction of law and order; since then, has been the period in which "the lessons of the past were being carried into practice." In other words, administration on the lines advocated by Lugard has only been possible since 1898.

It is also true that science has largely checked what above all distressed Mary Kingsley, the wastefulness of European life, and has rendered possible what she saw to be necessary, a much greater continuity of administration. In 1899 Major Ronald Ross went out to the West Coast carrying a warm letter of introduction from

her to Major Nathan, then at Sierra Leone: and the campaign thus set on foot against the malaria-carrying mosquito has been answerable for much of the improvement. Yet she would have been the last to claim for herself any share of credit here. If her influence exists or existed, it is not traceable in material conditions, but in ways much less easy to define.

I am not alone in believing that it has existence. Major Ruxton, C.B.E., who was Deputy Governor of Nigeria before he retired in 1930, after having served in that country since 1898, writes to me simply: "My impression is that Mary Kingsley did profoundly modify West African policy and the outlook of the few who then went out there."

In what way then did she influence it? The true answer is given, I think, not by an Englishman, but by a French student of Colonial affairs, who knew Mary Kingsley and was among the first members of the Society founded in her honour. M. Emile Baillaud, while serving on the staff of M. Roume, Governor of French Guinea, was commissioned to visit the English possessions and study their administration. Having published in 1907 a treatise, *La Situation Économique de l'Afrique Occidentale Anglaise et Française*, he issued in 1912 a long and detailed study called *La Politique indigène de l'Angleterre en Afrique Occidentale*. The book is dedicated "à l'African Society fondée par Madame J. R. Green pour continuer l'œuvre de Mary Kingsley." The value of this work and its generous candour are freely recognised by Lord Lugard, who quotes from it repeatedly in his *Dual Mandate*.

Briefly, then, this is what M. Baillaud has to say.

Throughout the nineteenth century, England controlled the West African possessions through the Crown Colony system, and up till the last decade, the Colonial Office was rigorously opposed to all attempt at expansion of this. But a wave of imperialism was sweeping over England and, outside of Government, two strong person-

alities pushed for action. One was the great shipowner, A. L. Jones, who sought to force the pace of West African trade by affording facilities of transport even in advance of the demand. The other, of a very different kind, was Sir George Goldie, who formed a commercial organisation to carry out a project of political expansion, in which he succeeded.

Yet in the opinion of M. Baillaud, neither the energy of Alfred Jones on the Coast, nor the statesmanship and organising ability of Sir George Goldie on the Niger, would have saved for England the possessions there which lay unsecured, and assailed by French and German rivals, had the Englishmen had nothing behind them but the Colonial Office as it was in 1895. Then, however, Chamberlain came into power. He quotes Mary Kingsley for the view that, though Goldie had begun the work, Mr. Chamberlain alone of all our statesmen saw the great possibilities and importance of West Africa, and inaugurated a policy which if it had had sound ground to go on would have succeeded. "It had not," she comments, "it had the Crown Colony system; and our hope for West Africa is that so powerful a man as he has shown himself to be in other political fields may show himself to be yet more powerful and formulate a totally new system suited to the conditions of West Africa."

Briefly, M. Baillaud holds that Mr. Chamberlain did achieve what Mary Kingsley outlined as possible, and that he did so by an extension of the system of protectorates, in which native institutions were administered by native rulers under a limited degree of white direction—as we have seen Lord Lugard and Sir Hugh Clifford explaining.

But behind the Minister another force was needed. "Public opinion," says M. Baillaud, "still had to be won over, and it was Mary Kingsley who accomplished this."

"The distance traversed in the years between 1890 and 1900 by both France and England in regard to

West Africa is difficult to realise (he says.) In France it was the explorers who made an end of the public's indifference. But it was left almost entirely for Mary Kingsley, single-handed, to fix the attention of England on the work that had to be done in West Africa and to indicate the methods which must be employed to accomplish it.

"It is hard to decide whether to admire most the quickness with which she divined the possibilities (to use her favourite word) and the needs of that vast country, or the scope and range of the influence which she exercised.

"When she made her first African journey, nobody had yet thought of asking whether the line of action adopted by white men was the best suited to ensure a rational development of their relations with the natives, or what were the principles on which this line of action should be based.

"To grasp these principles, and to gain acceptance for them, it was necessary to change the indifference or contempt displayed by almost all who till then had been in contact with the blacks, for that profound love which in Mary Kingsley extended itself to all mankind, and which she was to carry to the point of giving her life for them.

"But the wonderful thing about her was the alliance of this power of divination and sympathy to a perfect understanding of the needs of the countries she studied.

"And so, though men of her race had been coming to Africa for years, they had to wait for a woman to show them, by a labour such as no other woman had conceived and carried out, the things that they had never been able to see.

"I should need to write a book to sketch the extent of that work, and show how, after having penetrated the most difficult problem that primitive races present us with—their religion, their conceptions of society—Mary Kingsley took on herself, like an apostolate, the task of



making her own country know the lands which they called vaguely 'The White Man's Grave': of showing the value their possessions might have for them, and of defining, with an admirable loftiness of view, the policy to follow in dealing with the natives.

"Strangest of all, perhaps, her effect was chiefly made upon the trading community. After being amazed at first by her detailed knowledge and understanding, they found in her the mouthpiece for truths whose correctness they vaguely recognised, yet which they had never been able to formulate. And, while she pointed out these principles to them, she spoke in their name to the Government, asking for the application of them.

"That is how she came to be proud of hearing herself classed by Colonel Lugard among the traders—who really accepted her as one of themselves.

"Her devotion to the cause of the suffering cost her her life in South Africa, and she was gone before she could see the harvest of the ideas she had sown."

So far, then, as this very able student of colonial administration—who is now *Sécrétaire-Général* of the Colonial Institute at Marseilles—can judge, the policy of England in West Africa during the period which began when Mr. Chamberlain made his powers felt has been wise and beneficent, and has moved on new lines; and Mary Kingsley's influence has been an essential feature in determining it. Yet manifestly we are only at a beginning. I note as one of the things that would have seemed to her most significant and most hopeful the plea put forward by Professor Julian Huxley that in shaping African policy, the anthropologists should be taken into counsel, and his remarkable article in the *Fortnightly Review* for January 1932, "Why is the White Man in Africa?" The answer which he gives is that we must keep before us "the ideal of the future of an essentially African civilisation," subordinating all effort to "the one goal of the self-development and essential

self-government of the country." For, as Professor Huxley has realised, the African to-day is ravenous for instruction. "Education and political consciousness will spread in Africa. Every motor-car and every missionary, every book and every road, every application of white men's knowledge and every white man himself—all are agencies of change and in the broad sense of the word, of education. All we can do is to attempt that the education shall be good and not bad, constructive instead of merely subversive."

Those who hold these views will, I think, be well advised to turn back to what Mary Kingsley has written. It is not unnecessary to say this. Even her name is becoming merely a memory. This book is written and published with the hope to revive not merely her memory, but her vivifying influence.

It may be that we who knew her overrate the importance of what she accomplished, and M. Baillaud too may be under the same continuing illusion. But of one thing at least we are certain. There never was a woman, there never was a human being, known to any of us better worth the knowing; none more entertaining, none more abounding in experience, none more able to teach (yet who else was so modest?), none more generous, none of a more lively humanity, none less prone to give offence or take it. As for her essential courage in enterprise, it was such that beside it her fearlessness in physical danger seems only a minor trait; she spent the finest energies of her life in attempting that which she believed to be beyond her powers, broke her heart at it, but never gave in. I find it hard to believe that the story of her life, told so largely in her own words, will not revive for readers of to-day that unforgettable personality, her riotous delight in adventure, her fantastic blend of humour and high seriousness; above all, her broad tolerant yet unflinching determination to see where justice leads and walk there, whatever may stand in the path.

## APPENDIX

### A LETTER TO THE EDITOR OF "THE NEW AFRICA"

*The Union Liner "Moor,"  
In the Bay of Biscay.*

DEAR SIR,

I have been anxious to write and thank you for the review of my book, *West African Studies*, which you published in the November number of the *New Africa*.

I have been prevented from so doing up to now by wretched health, caused by repeated attacks of influenza, and by pressure of work. I now take the opportunity of the leisure I have on board ship to attempt to thank you for having so sympathetically understood what my views on the subject of African culture were. I own it is no easy matter to do this, because I do not belong to any well known party in this matter and my method of expression is, I know, bad; and I am therefore all the more grateful to those few who will take the trouble to understand what I mean.

This subject of the relationship between European and African culture is one in which I am quite deeply interested. I am quite sure that the majority of the Anglo-Saxons are good men, and I am equally sure the majority of the true Negroes are good men—possibly the percentage of perfect angels and calm scientific minds in both races is less than might be desired, but that we cannot help. Now it seems to me a deplorable thing that the present state of feeling between the two races should be so strained; and that unsatisfactory state, I cannot avoid thinking, arises largely from mutual misunderstanding. It does not seem to me to be unavoidable—a natural race hatred—but a thing removable by making the two people understand each other, and by avoiding rousing a hatred in either for the other by forcing them into interference with each other's institutions.

The great difficulty is of course how to get the people to understand each other. The white race seems to me to blame in saying that all the reason for its interference in Africa is the improvement of the native African, and then proceeding to alter African institutions without in the least understanding them; while the African is to blame for not placing clearly before the Anglo-Saxon what African institutions really are, and so combating the false and exaggerated view given of them by stray travellers,

missionaries and officials, who for their own aggrandisement exaggerate the difficulties and dangers with which they have to deal. It is mere human nature for them to do this thing, but the effect produced on the minds of our statesmen has terrible consequences. The stay-at-home statesmen think that Africans are awful savages or silly children—people who can only be dealt with on a reformatory penitentiary line. This view you know is not mine, nor that of the very small party—the scientific ethnologists—who deal with Africa; but it is the view of the statesmen and the general public and the mission public, in African affairs. And it will remain so until you who know European culture, who are educated in our culture, and who also know African culture, will take your place as true ambassadors and peacemakers between the two races and place before the English statesmen the true African, and destroy the fancy African made by exaggeration, that he has now in his mind. Forgive me for speaking plainly upon a very delicate point, but it seems to me that the leading men among the European-educated Africans have depended too much on the religious side of the question. I know that there is a general opinion among the leading men of both races that Christianity will give the one possible solution to the whole problem. I fail to be able to believe this. I fail to believe Christianity will bring peace between the two races, for the simple reason that though it may be possible to convert Africans *en masse* into practical Christians, it is quite impossible so to convert Europeans *en masse*. You have only got to look at the history of any European nation—the Dutch, the Spanish, the Italian and German—every one calling themselves Christians, but none the more for that, tolerant and peaceable. Each one of them is ready to take out a patent for a road to Heaven and make that road out of men's blood and bones and the ashes of burnt homesteads. Of course by doing this they are not following the true teaching of Jesus Christ, but that has not and will not become a factor in politics. So I venture to say that you who build on Christianity in this matter are not building on safe ground. You cannot by talking about Christianity to the Europeans save your people. I believe there is a thing you could appeal to more safely in this case of the Anglo-Saxon, particularly the English—that thing is *honour*, the honour of a gentleman. There are thousands of Englishmen who would not mind being told they were no Christians to do so and so, who would mind being told they were no gentlemen to do so and so, and who would not do wrong if they knew the facts of the case; who would not destroy native independence and institutions if they but knew what those things really were; who would respect native law if

they knew what it was, and who would give over sneering at the African and respect him if they knew him as he is really and truly, as I have known him; and who, though they might say, as I do, the African is different from the European, yet would say, he is a very fine fellow and we can be friends. Then there is another factor in this matter I wish you to consider carefully and let me some day know your opinion on, namely, the factor of nationalism. I believe that no race can, as a race, advance except on its own line of development, and that it is the duty of England, if she intends really and truly to advance the African on the plane of culture and make him a citizen of the world, to preserve the African nationalism and not destroy it; but destroy it she will unless you who know it come forward and demonstrate that African nationalism is a good thing, and that it is not a welter of barbarism, cannibalism and cruelty. I have had to stand up alone these two years and fight for African freedom and institutions, while Africans equally well and better educated in English culture have been talking about religious matters, etc., to a pack of people who do *not care* about Christianity at all. The Christian general public up here will bring little influence to bear on preserving Africa's institutions. The public, be it granted, is a powerful one, but it has been taught that all African native institutions are bad, and unless you preserve your institutions, above all *your land law*, you cannot, no race can, preserve your liberty.

I should like to direct your attention to a book called *Black Jamaica*, by a Mr. Livingston, recently published. That book is much thought of just now. In it you will see it put down that those Africans who went as slaves to Jamaica were people of no culture of their own; they were, as it were, slates or blank sheets of paper on which any man could write what he chose to. Well, that is not true. Those Africans had a culture of their own—not a perfect one, but one that could be worked up towards perfection, just as European culture could be worked up. I do not say that if Europe does break down the nationality of Africa she will utterly destroy Africans or African culture, but I do say that if she does it, she will make the Africans a people like the Jews—a landless people and an unhappy people. I beg you, Sir, to do your best to prevent this fate falling on your noble race. I believe you can best do it by stating that there is an African law and an African culture; that the African has institutions and a state form of his own. I believe if you do this thing fairly and well, that England at any rate will not destroy the African nationality, nor will she give them an African grievance, as she from *ignorance not intention* has given the Irish. If you will look up the old Irish

Brehon laws, you will find there the same form of land law you have in Africa. The English have only during the past 50 years or so known that law. Had they known it in Elizabeth's day, we should have had no Irish land question. You have the chance. God is always giving chances of teaching men in time how to prevent a repetition of the Irish tragedy. I think if you will do the work it will be good work. Mr. Sarbah is at present the only man who has worked on the question, in his book on *Fanti Customary Law*. That book has done a great deal, and Mr. Sarbah deserves well of his countrymen, who wish to be free citizens and not slaves, *however cultured in European culture*.

Forgive this ill-written letter. I am writing in the Bay of Biscay, an unrestful place for writing in. I am on my way over to nurse fever cases in South Africa. I may never see West Africa again, but if I do, I hope it will be Liberia. I assure you I shall always feel grateful for the invitation to come there. I know I have been a nuisance. I know I have spoken words in wrath about the educated missionary-made African, and I am glad to hear you will tolerate me, I who desire to get on with the utter Bushman and never sneer or laugh at his native form of religion, a pantheism which I confess is a form of my own religion. I yield to no one in the admiration for Jesus Christ, and I believe in the Divine origin, but the religion His ministers preached I have never been able to believe in.

I hear my friend, Dr. Blyden, is in Liberia; if he is, please ask him if he got the books I sent him to Sierra Leone, Le Bon's *Psychology of People* and another, all right. Please give him my kindest regards, and ask him to write me a line saying how he is to Miss Kingsley, in care of the Standard Bank, Cape Town, South Africa, and believe me, Sir,

Yours gratefully,

M. H. KINGSLEY.

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